

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Chimen Abramsky is Emeritus Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University College, London. Malcolm Bradbury's most recent novel, *Rates of Exchange*, was published earlier this year. Kevin Brownlow's *Napoleon* was published earlier this year. C. S. L. Davies is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. Christopher Fryling is Professor of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art. Philip French is the *Observer's* film critic. Richard Grenier is the film critic of *Commentary*. Miriam Griffin is a Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford. Michael Hofmann's first collection of poems, *Nights in the Iron Hotel*, has just been published. Ruth Praver Jhabvala has written screenplays for *Quartet*, *The Europeans* and her own novel *Heat and Dust*. Roland Littlewood's *Aliens and Alienists* (with Maurice Lipsedge) was published last year. Edward N. Luttwak's most recent book *The Grand Strategy of The Soviet Union* was published this year. Colin MacCabe is the author of *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, 1979. Norman MacCaig's latest collection of poems is *A World of Difference*, 1983. Ian McEwan's screenplays include *The Imitation Game* and *The Ploughman's Lunch*. Adam Mars-Jones is the editor of *Mac West is Dead: Recent Lesbian and Gay Fiction*, 1983. Stephen Mills is a natural history film maker. Nicholas Mostey's latest book, *Beyond the Pale*, has just been published. Thomas Nagel is Professor of Philosophy at New York University. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith is director of publications at the British Film Institute. Helke A. Oberman's latest book, *Luther: Mensch Zwischen Gott und Teufel*, was published earlier this year. Dilys Powell's books include *The Villa Ariadne*, 1973. Piers Paul Read's latest novel is *The Villa Gollitsyn*, 1981. Eric Rhode's *A History of the Cinema: from its origins to 1970* was published in 1976. David Robinson is *The Times's* film critic. S. Schoenbaum is the author of *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, 1977. Leonardo Sciascia's novels include *Candido*, *A Dream Dreamed in Sicily*, 1977. Robin Sanger is the author of *Tiberius*, 1972. Paul Smith is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton. Paul Snowden is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. John Terraine was awarded the Chesney Gold Medal, highest award of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies. Michael Wood's *America in the Movies: Or Santa Maria, It Had Slipped My Mind* was published in 1975. Peregrine Worsthorne is Associate Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Joseph Blum White (1775-1841): letters or other material relating to him; for a biography. MARTIN MURPHY. 58 Stratford Street, Oxford OX4 1SW.

Margaret L. B. Woods: present owner of manuscript and/or proofs of her novel, *A Village Tragedy* (1887). MARY LAGO. Department of English, Arts and Science Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65201.

George Cecil Ives (1867-1950): any information, particularly concerning letters to and from Ives, and reminiscences. CHARLES NAFUS. Department of Radio-Television-Film, Austin Community College, Humanities Division, Box 2285, Austin, Texas 78768.

Mitchell Kennerley (1878-1950): American publisher raised in Burslem; letters and other recollections; for a biography. MATTHEW J. BRUCOLI. Department of English, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina 29208.

R. S. Thomas: personal recollections and correspondence; details of critical and other material in languages other than English; details of material published by/about Thomas in publications of limited availability; anything else connected with R. S. Thomas; for a study. SIMON BARKER. St David's University College, Lampeter, Dyfed, SA48 7ED, Wales.

J. R. Illingworth (d 1915), contributor to *La Mundi*, etc. Nearly fifty letters from Charles Gore to Mrs Illingworth, covering the period 1896-1926, have recently been discovered in the archives of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield; they may be of interest to scholars in this field. MARTIN JARRETT-KERR. Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 0JN.

Percy John Delf Smith (1882-1948): any information from relatives, friends or students about his life and work; Smith's lettering, his teaching methods and the work of the Doran Studio (later the Dorn Workshop) of particular interest. JOHN SHAW. 53 Victoria Avenue, Leeds LS9 9DL.

First World War Survivors: contact sought with surviving servicemen of the First World War or with those with civilian recollections; letters, diaries, etc also sought; for a vernacular history of the First World War. LYN MACDONALD. c/o Michael Joseph Ltd, 44 Bedford Square, London WC1.

Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908): information about any unpublished material relating to Norton beyond that at Harvard and the Library of Congress, for a biography. JAMES TURNER. University of Massachusetts-Boston, Harbor Campus, Boston, Massachusetts 02125.

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Cover picture: Max Peckstein's 1912 woodcut 'Akrobalen III', which will be sold at Sotheby's St George Street Gallery, 1 St George Street, London W1, on Wednesday December 7.

The painture of prosperity

John Hayes

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL
Constable: The Painter and His Landscape
 255pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £15.95.
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Constable is one of the most generally loved of all British painters, and has seemed often one of the easiest to understand. We know a great deal about both his work and his life; indeed, with hardly an exception - Van Gogh is one - his career is better documented than that of any other major artist of a century earlier than our own. It is true that, in spite of the diligence of Ian Fleming-Williams, Leslie Parris and other Constable specialists, a high proportion of his exhibited work remains missing or unidentified, and we await the *catalogue raisonné* by Graham Reynolds and Charles Rhyne, the first volume of which will appear next year; but it is possible none the less, as was demonstrated at the great Constable exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1976, to follow his painting in all its variety almost year by year. Moreover, the progress of his work, his intentions and frustrations regarding it, his attitudes and feelings towards art in general and the art world in particular, the nature of his emotions and the circumstances of his daily life, are intimately known from a voluminous, highly articulate and, for the most part, very frank correspondence, now fully published.

Yet our view of Constable, historically never more than partial, as Conal Shields has shown in a brilliant essay, remains out of focus; the late Basil Taylor, an extremely sensitive critic, confessed that, "after looking at his work persistently for over thirty years", he continued to find it "more perplexing than general opinion has told me I should". For the Victorians Constable was far from perplexing; he formed part of the pastoral myth, unfolding a vision of rural heartiness singularly attractive to a newly industrialized nation, and was to this extent associated with the Gainsboroughesque; the neat, refined generalizations of his mediocre imitator, F. W. Watts, satisfied the same emotional need, and Constable's sketches were neither acceptable nor admired when they were first shown in the 1830s. By the turn of the century this attitude was changing, and for the next fifty or sixty years it was precisely the oil sketches and studies, in which natural appearances were transcribed with such breathtaking accuracy and brilliance, that were regarded as the essence of Constable's achievement. So much so that, when in 1965 Graham Reynolds published his *Constable the Natural Painter*, still the most lucid and balanced general account of the artist, he felt it necessary to counterbalance this bias by stressing Constable's gifts as a pictorial designer, and the importance of the large-scale paintings of the Stour, the great six-footers for which the painter reserved "his most intense intellectual labour, and on which he staked his own claim to the regard of posterity". Basil Taylor, writing a decade later, in 1973, placed his emphasis differently, on the increasingly powerful and

after 1828, dark emotions with which Constable charged his landscapes; for him the work was the sombre and stormy "Hadleigh Castle" rather than "The Hay Wain". Now, ten years later still, following significant but controversial essays by John Barrell (1980) and Ronald Paulson (1982), we have Michael Rosenthal's interpretation.

Rosenthal's thesis is that Constable was essentially the painter of a locality, the Stour Valley, in which his family lived and worked, and that, in their iconography, his pictures of this region reflect contemporary ideology; accordingly, it is this topic upon which he focuses. The author is well equipped for his inquiry, since he was brought up near Nayland, thus knows Constable's country intimately,



"The Bridges Family" by Constable, who lived with the family while he painted their portrait in 1804. Bridges was a business associate of the artist's father Golding - who had grown prosperous through milling, trade and transport - and this portrait is typical of Constable's early exploitation of his family's social contacts.

and has added research into social and economic, especially agricultural, history, to a knowledge of local affairs and much reading in the literature of the period. His argument runs as follows, and the first part of it is unexceptionable: Constable was the son of a prosperous farmer, mill-owner and entrepreneur in a county deeply proud of its agricultural superiority; with the principal part of his income derived from the land, he identified with the farming interest and the maintenance of the status quo, was ultra-Tory in his political outlook, and accepted the notion of a divinely ordered world. His love of the country round his birthplace, his belief that the particular reflected the divine, and his passion for truth, all stimulated contempt for his fellow-students at the Academy - concerned largely, as he thought, with execution and a facile bravura - and set him on the path of what he called a "natural painture".

Unlike most contemporary, and many earlier, landscape painters, Constable did not tour Britain in search of suitable, picturesque sub-

jects; he did not even seek out the scenery of the nearby Orwell, recognized as painters' country; he was exceptional, indeed revolutionary, in his stay-at-home habits and his steady concern for place, concentrating, from 1811, on the very specific area of the Stour Valley. He wrote of the "endless beauties of this happy country", developed an astonishing proficiency in sketching from nature in oil, and gradually took to painting larger, finished works *en plein air* ("Boat Building at Flatford" and "View of Dedham", both 1814). In these examples of a perfected "natural painture", and the six-footers which led up to "The Hay Wain", Constable consistently used a high viewpoint, thus introducing a sweep of land to contain significant rural detail illustrating the

prosperity consequent on the harmonious relationship between industrious labourers and the farming interest, and, as in eighteenth-century georgic poetry, suggesting, through this falconism, the civilized state of Happy Britannia, barge-building, for example, "will lead the observer's thoughts on to wider ideas of Trade, and its importance to Britain". This state of things was shattered by the East Anglian riots, rick-burning and machine-breaking of 1821-2, manifestations of a deepening agricultural depression. Henceforth, except in pictures representing places, such as Brighton, where he had no emotional ties, Constable abandoned significant, georgic subject-matter and topographical precision; he dropped his viewpoint, distancing his imagery, and developed an almost abstracted *facture* to express an increasing absorption in evanescent effects of wind and rain and cloud, "the bolder phenomena of nature". "The Leaping Horse" is the masterpiece representative of this volte-face. "These 1820s canal scenes, in contrast to the East Anglian landscapes of 1810-21, are

removed from significant concern with literary, topographical, political, social or other elements".

This is a considered and consistently argued view, and it reflects a fashionable trend in art history. Recently, in British landscape studies, we have had John Barrell's investigation of the rural poor in the painting of Gainsborough, Morland and Constable - Rosenthal acknowledges a particular debt to Barrell - and David Solkin's re-interpretation, in very precise political terms, of Richard Wilson. In the cases of Wilson and Gainsborough we have no reason to suspect political motivation, certainly not subscription to what Solkin calls a "patrician mythology": they were both very independent-minded men. Of course, even non-committed artists may express in their work reactions to particular circumstances they see around them, and many of Gainsborough's later landscapes do reflect, in a general way, a Goldsmithian nostalgia for a way of life that was slowly passing; but to say of his idylls of these years representing peasants going to, or returning from, market, as Rosenthal does here, that "there was little pleasing dalliance . . . Gainsborough's figures have become dislocated, and were always travelling . . . the painting of a constantly moving poor may have been his response to the introduction of a capitalistically rationalised economy" is wrong on the first count and seems to me otherwise to stretch the visual evidence.

It is similar politically loaded overstatement that I find disturbing in Rosenthal's account of Constable, who, as we have seen, was a person with substantial vested interests and of pronounced political views, and may justifiably be studied in this light. Can we believe, for example, that the juxtaposition in "Wivenhoe Park" of "ornamental swan with toiling fishermen" (note Rosenthal's adjectives) was really intended to help suggest a combination of beauty with utility in a gentleman's park that would be appreciated in terms of the rural harmony? Was the choice of viewpoint for the glimpse of Willy Lott's cottage in "The White Horse" really deliberate, "to connect with the country house composition, and reflect approval of the social hierarchy by inferring that on his level Lott displayed the same laudable characteristics as Rebow [of Wivenhoe Park] did on his"? Does the dunghill in the 1814 "View of Dedham" really take "pride of place" as a symbol of agricultural progress, hence of social and cultural perfection: "manure, essential for heavier crops, indicated that these farmers knew their business. Bigger yields increased profits, which was not only to the advantage of the farmer, but also the nation"? Inferences such as these are unconvincing.

Where Rosenthal is excellent is on Constable's interests in literature. Constable regarded "The Ancient Mariner" as the finest modern poem, but it was with the works of Thomson, Gray, Goldsmith and, above all, Cowper, rather than Wordsworth and the Romantic poets (Byron he came to excrete) that he was intimately familiar. The significance for him, and popularity, of the Suffolk poet Robert Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*, a

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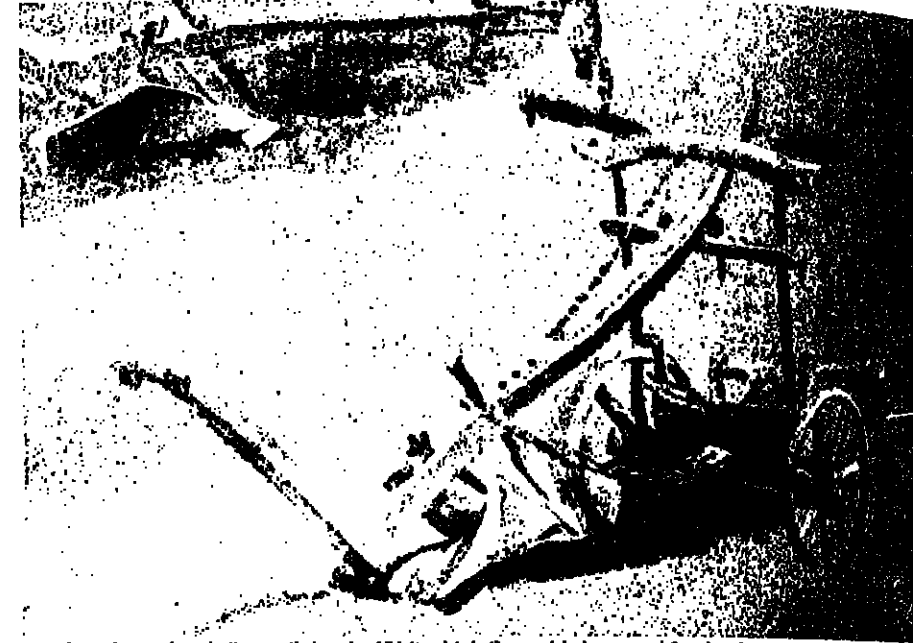
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georgic pastoral published in 1800, from which the painter derived a couplet to accompany his "Ploughing Scene in Suffolk" in the 1814 Academy catalogue, is stressed. No doubt there is a parallel between Constable's proud and meticulous depiction of the everyday scenes of the Stour Valley and the ethos of such works. Rosenthal believes that the parallel extends to Constable's detail-filled landscapes, viewed as if from a slight eminence, reflect the eighteenth-century poets' delight in prospect, in surveying a scene of multifarious activities, enumerating its details, and then drawing a moral; but this poetic vision (not the moralizing) itself derives from Rubens and seventeenth-century prospect painting, and Rubens was, of course, a major influence on Constable.

Constable frequently declared that to him painting was a moral duty, but his moral, in the 1810s, lay simply in the equivalence in his landscapes to the universal Sir Joshua Reynolds sought from history painting: "Heaven's munificence" (Bloomfield), the sunshine, plenty and serenity around East Bergholt. Had this state of exaltation changed – and here we are reaching the crux of Rosenthal's argument – by the time he painted "The Lock" (1824) and "The Leaping Horse" (1825)? Rosenthal maintains that "The View on the Stour" (1822) is a landscape intermediary in a profound change of style. But is he justified in declaring so categorically that "an account of Constable's stylistic development must fail to explain the crisis of 1822"? Was there in fact a crisis in his style at all? For Graham Reynolds the six canal scenes "conform to a general pattern into which the artist has introduced a progressive development".

In pursuit of his thesis, Rosenthal devotes an entire chapter to the relationship between employers and employed in rural England, and

contemporary attitudes towards this problem, leading up to the Suffolk riots of 1821–2. Of course Constable was disturbed by this explosive situation – as much by the irresponsibility of the squire and rector at East Bergholt as by anything – but he was not astounded; life on the Stour did not cease to have credibility; as he wrote in 1825, he knew of old (and this is the point) what could happen when labourers gather together: "evil disposition are fanned . . . with any plan for the injury of the great – that may be ripe . . . remember I know these people well – having seen so many of them at my father's." Moreover, Constable was now working in London – his last protracted stay at Bergholt had been in 1817 – and there is only this single reference in his correspondence to the state of affairs in Suffolk. If one examines his painting at the time, it is true that, as Paulson also notes, 1822 marked certain changes in emphasis, notably a lower viewpoint. But the tenacity with which Constable pursued his theme – "driving a nail", as he put it – is a tendency much more remarkable. The imagery of these years is hardly purged of content, as Rosenthal asserts, nor is the spectator barred from the picture space. The lock-keeper in "The Lock" and the horse jumping the sluice in "The Leaping Horse" are Constable's most powerfully realized images of typical activity along the Stour, and the scenes almost bear down upon the spectator; indeed "The Lock" was the most successful of all Constable's rural scenes, and would not have been so without its strong narrative element. What he was also developing was a more varied response to weather and effect, and an astonishing dexterity, already evident in "The Hay Wain" (1821), at achieving it. Constable's first "sky-ing" dates from before the so-called crisis of 1822. Finally, it is worth remarking that it was one of the placid, "georgic" scenes, "Strat-



"Studies of two ploughs", an oil sketch (1814) which Constable later used for the ploughs in "The Cornfield" (1824) and "Stoke-by-Nayland" (1835); reproduced from Constable's England by Graham Reynolds (Uby Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £12.95, 0 297 783599).

ford Mill" (1820), by which Constable continued to want to be represented in exhibitions. As Rosenthal observes, by 1826 Constable was increasingly preoccupied with popular recognition and that elusive attainment, his election as an Academician.

The economic, social and ideological history affecting art is a subject art historians cannot afford to ignore, and John Barrell, though unashamedly provocative in his left-wing bias, has performed a valuable service in opening up new fields of inquiry in British landscape painting. But there are dangers which can attach to his approach: too hard a search for meaning in works of art, so that staffage, for example, may be invested with spurious symbolism, over-en-

thusiasm in the use of evidence in support of hypothesis, an underlying rigidity in basic assumptions.

Rosenthal is deeply knowledgeable about his chosen painter; he has given us a most useful account of the Constable family background, and shrewd insights abound in his discussion of Constable's landscapes. There is much to be enjoyed in, and gained from, this book; but it is flawed by the nagging insistence of its principal contention. For a valid and sustained critical analysis one returns in the end to Reynolds, a scholar who has studied Constable at closer quarters and over a longer span than anyone alive. Not much has escaped his attention.

Metaphormorphosing

Peter Kemp
TARDEUSZ KONWICKI
A Minor Apocalypse
Translated by Richard Lourie
224pp. Faber, £8.95.
0 711 130186

At one point, the central character in Tadeusz Konwicki's *A Minor Apocalypse* is given an injection by police interrogators which causes agonizing hypersensitivity. The novel itself seems the work of someone in just such a state.

In structure, it is classically simple – an account of the final day of a man preparing to turn himself to death as a gesture of political protest. In content, it is a baroque agglomeration of the loathsome. Tadeusz, the protagonist – a dried-up writer who drinks – views everything through nauseated jaundiced eyes. Not that there's much sign of anything inspiring around him. The narrative opens "at the gloomy hour at which autumn's hopeless days begin". And, for the rest of the day, conditions remain grim. Cold winds rattle at badly-puttled window-panes. Rain seeps into dilapidated bones. There is hail and, finally, snow.

The Warsaw through which Tadeusz wanders is equally dismal. Though a banner bearing the legend, "WE HAVE BUILT SOCIALISM" floats above the Congress Hall, disintegration is spectacularly apparent everywhere. With deafening symbolism, houses crash down; a bridge collapses; chunks of masonry regularly drop off the Palace of Culture. The population too – mainly drunk and demoralized – are going to pieces. Law and order has caved in. Nervous breakdowns proliferate. In the Congress Hall, a prominent Party dignitary denounces his comrades, then demagogically undresses. Madmen roam the streets because "the psychiatric hospitals are packed with government officials of every sort". Nor is it just Party functionaries who are showing drastic signs of wear and tear. Dissidents, also, are badly mired by the stagnancy Konwicki's book declares: the feet of one woman, idealist look "as if they'd been boiled in formaldehyde"; another has a "greenish" grin.

Revision pulses through the book but, as Konwicki ultimately seems to recognize, it is never channelled into anything strikingly effective. "My times", his writer-protagonist declares, "compelled me to monotony, unmodulated groans, stammers, repulsive hysteria, hurried stammerings, one-sided accusations, to an ugliness that was none too appealing."

For much of the novel, Konwicki appears to be engaged in some exacerbated but obscure setting of scores and drawing-up of accounts. As his hero rambles across Warsaw, he stumbles upon surreal or satiric, ferocious or farcical scenes of a semi-allegorical nature. There are contemptuous cameos of stool-pigeons and sell-out, fellow-travellers taken for a ride by Russia. Varying artistic postures are displayed – often rather monumentally: as when a writer is informed, "You have bred blind, deaf delusions, who in their marvellous artistic pastimes create beautiful, universal art." There is – in a film director, Wladyslaw Bulat – what

seems to be a scornful portrait of Andrzej Wajda. And Polish Catholicism gets similarly short shrift as a bunch of zealots congregates around a plaster statue and a dubious priest.

With the narrator's confessions of having "caressed puppets made of protein and loved sexless biological mannequins", or a phantasmagoric episode in which he encounters a reunion of his old mistresses gathered round a bonfire, the book becomes murky personal. On the other hand, Tadeusz's meeting and union with a girl called Hope – an illegitimate descendant of Lenin – is all too obvious in its purport. Partly, it is stressed, he must put his trust in what he calls "the mysterious feminine element borne here by the solar winds from the viscera of the universe", and partly in the "people, that biological river". Emotional paeans to the "people" – the book's final word, significantly – often peel rhetorically forth. Early in the narrative, it is affirmed that "In sin and holiness, in conformity and rebellion, in betrayal and redemption, they will bear the soul of the nation into eternity." By the novel's final pages, their function has become even more elevated: they "have created God . . . A God formed of our electromagnetic waves or some other sort of waves. . . . He will make us the chosen race."

It is to fire the people, the narrator eventually decides, that he must perform his act of self-immolation. After years spent smouldering with resentment, he will incinerate himself so that "A night of indifference, apathy, chaos" may be irradiated. His act is intended as an affirmative blow against indifference – seen here as Poland's most weighty burden: "Perhaps indifference, the child of mediocrity, is a volatile material like the mist which petrifies, forms crags, and rises to the sky in a mountainous mass while crushing our pitiable life".

As if in defiance of the narrowness and mediocrity it castigates, the novel bulges with cosmic imagery and exaggerated conceits. References to such things as "the ocean of chaos we call the universe" or "the inaudible groan of the aging cosmos" are rampant. Repeatedly, Konwicki's prose balloons with afflatus: "Somewhere out there in the abyss of the night, the Ukraine was dying, Lithuania was perishing, Belorussia was breathing its last. . . . An interstellar bell had rung its Angelus. The heart of the cosmos beat in alarm." Metaphor metamorphoses with such frequency that it luridly obscures what is supposed to be illuminating: the Palace of Culture, for instance, starts off looking like "a stone layer cake", later pops up as an "indecent erection", and finishes as a "gigantic fish". Overwrought over-writing takes on epidemic proportions: "Mercilessly, the genes passed the nastiness of the parents' occupations, the herpes of their moral abominations, the carbuncles of their venality on to the faces of their offspring." Amidst the hysteria and hyperbole, there are some quietly effective touches – such as the narrator's needing, as part of his preparations, to buy Swedish matches at a hard-currency store since he doesn't rely on the efficacy of the local brands. But, over-inflamed by disgust, *A Minor Apocalypse* really burns itself out long before its hero nears his funeral pyre.

Criminal proceedings

PATRICIA ROBERTS
Under Prey
336pp. Chatto & Windus, £7.95.
0 7011 27309

Detective Jim Hackett of the NYPD's Missing Persons Bureau tracks an Irish psychopath, who happens to be a necrophiliac paedophile, through the New York of the 1930s, in the process irrevocably shattering up his own life. This cross between a horror novel and a detective story has a fair amount of over-elaboration about it, both in style and content, and the tale's characters seem far too modern for their carefully depicted surroundings. The book-jacket compares Patricia Roberts simultaneously to Patricia Highsmith, Ed McBain and P. D. James. This is over-egging the pudding more than somewhat, but nevertheless *Under Prey* is a remarkable first novel: an extremely easy story, powerfully narrated.

R. B. DOMINIC

A Flaw in the System
192pp. Macmillan, £6.95.
0 333 358074

Ohio congressman Ben Safford unwillingly, and solely to oblige his sister, takes up the case of a young pilot found guilty of negligence after crashing a VX-90, the USAF's new wonder fighter. To his surprise Ben finds himself taking the lid off one of the nastiest cans of worms he's seen for some time, involving the State Department, Defence, some Saudi Arabian diplomats, and one of the largest aircraft firms in the States. R. B. Dominic is, as is well known, another name for Emile Lahen: like all books written by both authors, *A Flaw in the System* is a good story told with dry wit and in a crisp, cool and civilized manner.

T. J. Binyon

Metropolitomania

David Montrose

JULIAN EVANS (Editor)
London Tales
309pp. Hamish Hamilton, £8.95.
0 241 111234

A collection of new stories entitled *London Tales* might be expected to concentrate on what makes the capital unique: the area, measuring about six miles east-west, two miles north-south, at its very centre. Proximity to that golden rectangle apart, metropolitan life is essentially no different from provincial life. But the eighteen contributors to *London Tales*, all residents or past residents, were asked for stories "inspired by their portion of the city", a proviso that has induced artistic tunnel vision.

Geographical setting is in fact irrelevant to a number of these stories. It is beside the point that Michael Levey's "The Death Dish", a pale reworking of Scott Fitzgerald's "The Cut-Glass Bowl", takes place in West Brompton, and Peter Ackroyd's perfunctory depiction of an obsession with tattooing ("The Inheritance") in Chelsea; Maggie Gee's "Mornington Place" derives not from its eponymous location, but from this year's water-workers' strike. Perhaps in recognition of this irrelevance, Carlo Gellier puts inverted commas around the title ("W.9.") of a story that has nothing to do with one Amos Rubilinsky living in that postal district, all to do with his son's suicide. Not that links between story and location have any intrinsic merit. "Outside Paddington" by Miles Kingston – a truncated chapter of accidents that begins when a passenger falls from a stationary train – and Giles Gordon's "A Bloomsbury Kidnapping", concerning the theft of a literary manuscript, could not be set anywhere else.

But each story still ends with a whimper after a promising start.

Generally unable to evoke a sense of place, the contributors instead drop names of localities, streets, and landmarks. Indeed, the narrator of G. Cabrera Infante's "The Phantom of The Esoldo" opens proceedings with a guided tour from his South Kensington home to the Esoldo cinema in Chelsea, the starting-point for clever-clever multiple narratives on the theme of The Phantom of the Opera. Sense of place is not, of course, a prerequisite for an effective story, as Francis King demonstrates with "Beakie", a study of a domineering mother and her young daughter, and Emma Tennant with her tale of the grotesque, "The Frog Prints". Nevertheless, the collection's outstanding stories do seem to impart something essential of their settings. In "Over the Bridge", Elizabeth Troop presents, like a prose Posy Simmonds, concurrent histories of a marriage in trendy Barnes and of two decades of radical chic, while Jane Gardam ("Rode by All with Pride") and Clive Sinclair ("Scriptophobia") portray distinctive social enclaves: Gardam, sympathetically, the solid citizenry of Wimbledon; Sinclair, indecorously, the Jewry of Hendon.

Only Desmond Hogan's "Elysium" celebrates London. His narrator, having walked out on an unfaithful husband in Ireland, finds comfort and contentment in Notting Hill. Elsewhere, lamentation is the norm. Alannah Hopkin's apparently autobiographical "Ripe" rejects London altogether, commemorating a would-be writer's decision to quit Soho, where she drinks much, writes little, for rural Wales, where she gets her novel finished.

The overall impression of *London Tales* is of one more anthology of disparate stories by divers hands, one more mixture of the good, the bad, and the mediocre, with the good not being sufficiently so to outweigh the rest.

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KENNETH C. LINDSAY and PETER VERGO
Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art
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924pp, with black and white illustrations.
Faber, £35 per set.

0 571 119352 – Volume 1

0 571 119360 – Volume 2

HANS K. ROETHEL and JEAN K. BENJAMIN
Kandinsky: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings, Volume One, 1900–1915

558pp, with colour and black and white illustrations. Sotheby Publications, £75.

0 856671495

When Wassily Kandinsky published a quite unexceptionable note on "Concrete Art" in the *London Bulletin* in 1939, the editors felt bound to disclaim responsibility for its content. Yet even this most radical painter of the European avant-garde had not always been unwelcome in this country, and still less in the United States. Between 1909 and 1914 a number of his most original compositions, mainly from the collection of Arthur Jerome Eddy, of Chicago, were shown by the Allied Artists' Association at the Albert Hall in London, and received in due course a sympathetic notice from Roger Fry. Other works, from the collection of the educational reformer Sir Michael Sadler, were also shown in London in 1913, under Fry's auspices, and the following year his son, M. T. H. Sadler, (later Michael Sadler), and confounded with his father by Roethel and Benjamin), translated Kandinsky's most important early text, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, under a title, *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, which takes it misleadingly close to the theosophical literature of the period. As Sadler wrote drily in 1949, "aesthetic theory was then as much beyond my comprehension as it still is". In the United States, Kandinsky was represented in the New York Armory Show of 1913, and shown at the Steiglitz Gallery on Fifth Avenue; and Eddy included a number of authentic extracts from his letters in *Cubism and Post-Impressionism* (1914).

It is thus entirely appropriate that we should have a substantial collection of Kandinsky's

writings in English, and that the standard catalogue of his works should be in that language. Both publications are welcome, the catalogue perhaps most for its visual documentation, including many high-quality colour-plates, and the *Writings* for their excellent translations (mainly by Peter Vergo) and their scrupulous attention to the bibliographical complexities of the painter's publications in several languages. Although the major texts have been available in English for some time, it is useful for the Anglo-American reader to have access to many lesser-known articles and interviews, especially of the earliest period, when Kandinsky's rather unprepared wit is deployed more amply than in the late years of passionate advocacy.

And yet neither of these books fulfils the promise of its title. In their preface, Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo describe their work more accurately as "all of Kandinsky's writings on art published during his lifetime, as well as a selection of interviews and lecture notes". Many essays and notes not published by the artist are already available in French and Italian translations, and will soon be in German; perhaps there are special reasons for their not appearing here; but, if so, they should surely have been stated. Lindsay and Vergo's editorial policy leads, for example, to the anomaly of translating the short extract of Kandinsky's stage composition, *Violent*, which was published in *Bauhaus* in 1927, but not the whole text of 1914, which is in the French and Italian editions of *Sens*. It is, in any case, rather surprising to find this and another stage-work, *The Yellow Sound*, as well as a considerable body of poetry, in a collection of writings on art, and one, moreover, which is clearly devoted first of all to an academic public. These volumes are handsomely designed (by Barbara Anderson) and the editors have taken the trouble to ensure the correct juxtaposition of text and image; but in the case of the most important collection of poems, *Sonnets* (1912), the large colour-woodcuts have been omitted for reasons of economy, which undermines the integrity of the enterprise. The function of this book, however useful, does not seem to have been thought out very clearly.

If Lindsay and Vergo have given us a collection of Kandinsky's writings on art, which less

than "complete", Hans K. Roethel and Jean K. Benjamin's catalogue of the *oeuvre* is anything but *raisonné*. They have modelled their entries on the handlists kept by Kandinsky and his mistress Gabriele Münter, which were confined to the barest documentation. A catalogue is not where we should necessarily expect to find an assessment of a painter's methods, but a discussion of Münter's ambiguous term *ibermals* in her lists leads here to the astonishing judgment: "Because of Kandinsky's definitive vision of a work that he had in mind, there are, generally speaking, no 'pentimenti' in his paintings." Kandinsky's own vivid account of the painting of "Composition VI" (1913), now in the Hermitage) makes nonsense of this claim; but it is one which perhaps helps to account for Roethel and Benjamin's casualness in the listing of preparatory materials for the artist's finished works. Usually we are sent vaguely to one of a number of other publications without any discussion of the relationship to the work in hand. Roethel and Benjamin claim that their dating is often based on stylistic criteria, but their visual assessments do not always carry conviction, and they are never argued. A lost work, No 323, is dated 1910 rather than 1909 simply on the basis of a thumbnail pencil sketch by the artist; the "sketch" and the painting reproduced under No 427 (another lost work) seem to be of quite different designs, the former relating more closely to No 433. It is not easy to see why the glass-painting version of "Woman in Moscow" (No 431) should be earlier than the version on canvas (No 344). A small painting of 1910, "Landscape with Rain" (No 341) is hardly a "study" for the large canvas of 1913 now in New York (No 438). Kandinsky simply picked up and used the earlier design.

These details are symptoms of a pervasive carelessness in the whole compilation. Exhibitions are listed only up to the mid-1970s; bibliographical references are very few, often confined to Grohmann's standard study of twenty-five years ago. There is, for example, no reference to Jonathan Fineberg's suggestion that "The Blue Rider" of 1903 (No 82) was included in the first major retrospective exhibition of Kandinsky's work, at Angers in 1907. (Fineberg's important work on Kandinsky and France seems to have been overlooked gener-

ally in this catalogue, and even Lindsay and Vergo irritatingly refer only to his unpublished dissertation of 1975 and not the summary published in *Art History*, II, 1979.) Although this is generally a finely produced volume there are some serious editorial slips: No 340 is reproduced upside-down (no joke with Kandinsky), and No 411 without Kandinsky's own painted frame. An important oil relating to "Composition VII" (GMS 63 in the *Städtische Galerie* in Munich) has been omitted.

Perhaps the least satisfactory feature of the catalogue as a whole is the decision to include only paintings in "oils". Roethel and Benjamin admit that Kandinsky often mixed his media, and their policy has deprived us of the opportunity of seeing the development of the painter's ideas, especially in the crucial years immediately preceding the first non-figurative works. In the early years of the century, Kandinsky developed his imaginative art more exclusively in the form of graphics and temporaria or gouache paintings, reserving oil sketches for "nature". About 1908 the distinction became blurred, and Kandinsky began to introduce the broad colouristic and painterly methods of the sketcher into large-scale pictures on literary and figurative themes, which were to develop into the subjective style of c1911–14. The most important catalyst may well have been the painter's 1908 collaboration with the composer Theodor von Hartmann, and the dancer Alexandra Sacharoff on a number of compositions for stage, none of which were, however, produced during Kandinsky's lifetime. These works, mandated not simply by the extraordinary gifts of far larger and stronger colouristic effects than he had hitherto used in his imaginative work, but by the artificial restrictions of the present genre, as well as its general disregard for the understanding of an artist whose achievement lies less in the individual works than in the wholeness of his vision.

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In the pocket of the aristocracy

Charles Ross

K.B. McFARLANE
England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays
279pp. Hambledon Press, 35 Gloucester Avenue, London, NW1 7AX.
£15 (paperback, £5.95).
0950688258

The late K.B. McFarlane acquired his formidable reputation as an authority on the history of late-medieval England – which still echoes through the corridors of historical power, more than a decade after his death – only partly through his writings, at least those published during his lifetime. A handful of articles and one small book (on John Wycliffe and the Lollards) scarcely account for it. It owed much to his capacity to inspire research (there is scarcely a university in the country which does not have its McFarlane-trained specialist, even unto the second generation by now), but also a series of splendid courses of lectures delivered in the University of Oxford over a period of years. For, in terms of publication, McFarlane remained an obstinate perfectionist. He would not even publish his Ford Lectures on the "Nobility of Later Medieval England", although most men would have rushed into print with them. It has been left to his devoted former pupils, notably G. L. Harriss and the late J. P. Cooper, to ensure that his posthumous *oeuvre* exceed in volume (although not diminished in quality) the work he himself was prepared to see in print during his own lifetime. This volume contains all the work published by McFarlane himself, here very conveniently brought together in a single place, and partially up-dated by Dr Harriss.

Some of these papers became influential classics whilst McFarlane lived, especially the two he devoted to his own concept of "Bastard Feudalism" ("Parliament and Bastard Feudalism", 1943; "The Middle Ages and the Middle Ages", 1945). In the later Middle Ages from what he saw as the comparatively stable relationships, based upon the tenure of land, between lord and client, towards a more unstable and socially dangerous association revolving around the payment of money fees to members of a lord's affinity (McFarlane personally did not see this "new" relationship as being politically dangerous, although others have done so since). This relationship, McFarlane believed, "enabled a lord to reach out beyond the frontiers of his fief", and so recruit service wherever he wished, establishing a local or regional dominance largely dependent on the depth of his own pocket, but also, in some degree, on his personal reputation and his influence at the centre of government, and thereby to the increasingly important sources of royal patronage.

These papers, as Harriss rightly observes, attest "the seminal quality of his [McFarlane's] insights". Time and further research, however, have somewhat tarnished the image. Harriss himself points out a number of reservations and revisions which should now be made. For example, McFarlane thought of "bastard feudalism" as "something essentially different while superficially similar" to earlier feudalism. This judgment needs alteration: it is now seen as a refinement, not a degeneration of earlier feudal custom, and not as an aberration from, but the logical successor to feudalism. A.O. A. Holmes pointed out some years ago it was no more than a passing phase in the organization of a landowning aristocracy.

THE HORSE IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

By Herbert James Hewitt
Limited Edition of
500 copies: £10.50

J. A. ALLEN & Co. Ltd.
1 Lower Grosvenor Place
London SW1W 0EL

orientated society which was to remain essentially unchanged until the advent of the Industrial Revolution. In the late eighteenth century, Edmund Burke, praising the nobility as the great oaks of the constitution, was talking about something little different, if less warlike, than the English society of pre-1500. W.H. Dunham has pointed out that in its "tertiary stage" in the late fifteenth century, money disappeared from the relationship between lord and retainer, to be replaced simply by a concept of "good lordship", that is, the capacity of the lord to dispense patronage – for that is now the fashionable term – to his followers and clients. It is only fair to add that McFarlane himself revised his views, in a series of still unpublished lectures, cited in footnotes by Harriss, in this general direction, away, that is, from the supposedly military origins of later medieval feudalism towards a wider concept of its peacetime function.

Yet criticism could be carried further than Harriss has chosen to do. In one sense, McFarlane's achievement was to divert attention away from generations of scholarly preoccupation with "constitutional" history and the workings of royal government and towards an appreciation of the vital role played by the aristocracy in the politics and society of later medieval England. This major concern with noblemen carried its own penalty. McFarlane (in "Parliament and Bastard Feudalism") stressed what he saw to be the interdependence of magnates and gentry, rather than the dominance of the gentry by the nobility. This conclusion he based upon the evidence of four East Anglian county elections, which he studied in detail, with the aid of the "inside knowledge" provided by the Paston Letters. Yet even this can be challenged, especially for shires like Northumberland, where a single magnate interest was predominant (here the Percy earls), as compared with the competing magnate interests in East Anglia.

More serious was his neglect of the massive electoral lottery of the Crown, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, two-thirds of a medieval House of Commons came from the boroughs, although their members increasingly came to be not genuine burgesses, but gentry, or what J. S. Roskill has called "the Westminster crowd" – lawyers, careerists, civil servants, men on the make who

wanted a seat in Parliament. Now the Crown controlled a large number of seats in what had already come to be the rotten or pocket boroughs familiar to us in more modern times (Old Sarum, of course, included), which were especially numerous in the decayed seaports of the south-west, so grossly over-represented in parliament until the Great Reform Act. Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, for example, each returned three times as many members as the entire great county of Yorkshire.

Also, McFarlane never seems to have appreciated fully the degree of patronage which the king could command in his capacity as Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester; there was no adult Prince of Wales for much of this period, and patronage remained in the king's hand. But even this does not quite compare with the huge resources of the Duchy of Lancaster, with its lands mainly in the Midlands and the North of England, which were brought to the Crown when Henry IV, as son of John of Gaunt, usurped the throne in 1399, and which were never alienated from royal control. Offices of profit on these estates were eagerly sought after by those privileged to eat at the king's table and drink his wine at Westminster or Windsor, or who aspired to do so, in this (as McFarlane called it) "ruthless and shamelessly acquisitive age".

If Harriss has chosen to concentrate, in his introduction to this volume, on the McFarlane essays dealing with Bastard Feudalism, more than half the volume has no connection with it. McFarlane was also interested in foreign war, so much a concern of his aristocrats, as well as the king, and half the gentry of England, during the long-drawn struggle to control France which we generally, if rather misleadingly, call "The Hundred Years' War". His essay on "War, the Economy and Social Change" (1962) argued that the war in France presented no serious drain on English resources (despite the enormous difference between the populations and wealth of the two countries) and that, on the whole, the English upper and middle classes benefited from it, by way of war wages, ransoms and plunder, despite some dislocation of trade and the impact of heavy war taxation. This conclusion was immediately hotly contested by M. M. Postan, and it must be admitted that the tide of battle has on the whole turned against McFarlane's chauvinist euphor-

ia, especially as regards the fifteenth century, when the tide of real war swung against the English. Yet some great fortunes were still to be made out of it, as McFarlane graphically showed (aided again by the Paston Letters), in his study of "The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War", which transformed his fortune from a mere £46 pa in land in 1404 to £1,061 in 1445 (though his income had been higher still while England still retained her French conquests). Some of this came through marriage to a co-heiress in 1409, but mostly from the war. Hard-headed and hard-fisted as Fastolf was, McFarlane will not have us thinking that he was a mere thrusting gentleman. He had civilized interests, acquired from the bookish and art-loving princes whom he served; but the money came from "spolia Gallorum", as John Leyland put it. Another and more curious example, if less successful, is inspired by "A Business Partnership in War and Administration", between two English esquires (it lasted no less than twenty-four years) which led McFarlane to conclude that "Like their masters the little men could do well out of the war even in its later, less glorious stages".

Only McFarlane would have had the slightly false modesty (or was it perhaps mental anguish?) to entitle his essay on that first great English antiquary, man of business to Sir John Fastolf, "William Worcester: A Preliminary Survey". Busy, inquiring and with a precise antiquarian mind (his measurements, by the way, of the dimensions of Bristol churches – or those that survived Hitler – have yet to be faulted), Worcester did a great deal to establish the study of English antiquities long before it became fashionable with John Leland and others. McFarlane's essay on the "War of the Roses" (originally published in 1964) rounds off the volume. Despite its essential stylishness and stimulating quality, this essay has been overtaken by time and further research, notably in the writing of Anthony Goodman, among others.

Meticulous scholarship, very lightly worn; a high degree of readability, even for those not versed in medieval history; a sense of humour, especially familiar with his subject matter, a most elegant prose style; an eye for the apt quotation or the sharp turn of phrase: these were among the qualities which made K.B. McFarlane the great historian that he undoubtedly was.

of permissible contingent remainders was increasingly widespread in marriage settlements. With the introduction of the trust to preserve contingent remainders about 1640 the strict settlement was born, receiving early recognition by Chancery. From an examination of several hundred marriage settlements for Kent and Northamptonshire, Bonfield is able to demonstrate that the strict settlement was already quite common by the years 1660–80 and widespread before the end of the century. No less significant, there is clear evidence that the device was not the monopoly of landed magnates but was also adopted by the allegedly declining lesser gentry.

Bonfield makes several other telling points. The strict settlement itself restrained powers of alienation for only one generation. Resettlements by successive life-tenants were necessary (usually on the marriage of the eldest son) if continuity of the habakkuk was to be maintained. This procedure was fraught with difficulty at a time of high mortality, when life-tenants commonly did not survive until the nuptials of their children. In fact, a prime concern of strict marriage settlements by 1700 was less with preserving landed continuity, than with directing and securing provisions for daughters and younger sons. This may be linked with enhanced social awareness of the need for a more equitable treatment of all the members of the family, mitigating the law of descent. Even so the end result of such settlements was frequently heavy indebtedness, with landowners forced into mortgaging their estates.

It is unfortunate that parts of Bonfield's argument are befogged by a clumsy style, whose opaqueness is compounded by the sometimes impenetrable technical jargon of

the legal historian. One yearns for Habakkuk's lucid, measured prose. Bonfield also misses a number of opportunities to shed light on the social context of the legal changes he describes. His analysis of marriage settlements on a ground, in his two counties, is rudimentary. One would like to know much more about variations in the reception of the device between different farming areas. Were "new" families, from London or elsewhere, particularly quick to adopt the innovation?

Also wanting is any sustained discussion of the lawyers who introduced the strict settlement to the localities, many of whom one might guess to be country attorneys. While Bonfield pays down the impact of legal manuals in the late seventeenth century, it is surely too glib to explain the rapid changes in conveyancing mainly in terms of "the centralised nature of legal education and practice in early modern England", even if the latter were true. No less than the London-based lawyers, the local attorneys were, as G. A. Holmes has recently demonstrated, prosperous and increasingly influential figures at this time. They were involved in a wide range of legal, administrative and economic activities, quite often pioneering new ideas and practices. The lawyers who drafted the marriage settlements which frequently forced families into debt had become principal suppliers of mortgage funds in the

Restoration England.

All kindness at King's

P. N. Furbank

IAN ANSTRUTHER
Oscar Browning: A Biography
289pp. John Murray, £12.50.
01954078X

One asks oneself why Oscar Browning is essentially a figure of fun, and not in the least a great man, for all that he achieved certain things that could reasonably be called "great". For it was he, more than any more serious historian, who was instrumental in creating a History school in Cambridge; and it was he again who, with the Cambridge University Day Training School, did so much to put Teacher Training on the map. That he was an outrageous publicity-monger and an amazing snob, in the lion-hunt sense, were necessary factors in these admirable achievements, so are hardly to be held against him. Nor does one particularly wish to hold anything against him. He strikes me as distinctly a good man. In the long run he became intolerable to his colleagues, whether as a housemaster at Eton, or Fellow of King's or Principal of the Day Training College, but not because of any malignity or serious evil in his character. In fact, with a selective use of the evidence provided in Ian Anstruther's valuable new study, you could make out an excellent case – indeed much beyond the normal requirement – for a claim to sainthood.

The deficiency, seeming to rule "greatness" out, may best be pinpointed in this way: that one could never imagine him saying anything of the least interest about another person's character. As housemaster at Eton he wrote to the parents of the young Gerald Balfour that "I am so extremely fond of him that I find it difficult to criticize his character. He really seems to me quite the most remarkable boy I have ever met, both morally and intellectually. He has the most entire purity of mind and character and at the same time is not at all unkind for contact with the world." The only fault that he detected in Gerald was a tendency towards nervousness; Gerald's parents were no doubt delighted, and Browning remained friends with Gerald for the rest of his life, but it is a question what, even fifty years later, he could be imagined to have known about him. There seems to be something to be said for reading novels. Though Browning wrote a popular and successful Life of George Eliot one can think of few people less likely to have written *Middlemarch*, or even to have understood it.

Ian Anstruther has wisely chosen not to splash about in the great pool of "O.B." anecdote but instead to see what he can make of the enormous Browning archive in the Hastings Public Library (given to the library by Browning in 1917 and rarely disturbed since). The collection consists largely of letters to Browning, from some 10,000 different correspondents; for oddity, though reportedly he wrote twenty or thirty long letters before breakfast every day – which seems to come to about half a million over his lifetime – only a handful of his own letters has survived.

Of the letters to him, a sizeable proportion comes from boys and youths: from young sailors, young soldiers, bank clerks, choristers, railwaymen etc. The pattern of his approach to the young was plainly Napoleonic. He waded in, offering affection, sympathy, large quantities of advice, money and practical help, and on top of all this a vision of the world as a glorious and promising (or as he would have said it, an "awfully jolly") place. It practically always seemed to work. It will be seen that what I have suggested as his great defect might actually have been a help here: for how attractive to the young – to acquire a friend or patron who showed no tendency whatever to criticize. You could tell him whatever you liked and he wouldn't mind.

Accordingly, letters from his young friends are almost unfailingly sentimental; they would, if they were covered in kisses and forget-the-world requests for photos and postcards, be regarded as a mild brotherly escapade, and would occasionally and apologetically include a request for a very small loan.

Quite often, too, in his letters about young

students, there would be extraordinary tributes to Browning as the only one who really understood or cared: "The O.B. knows me, those others are acquainted with me"; "they all agreed you are the best MAN they met while in Cambridge." Letters from parents would be every bit as ardent. Anstruther quotes one from a London draper, thanking Browning for his "extreme kindness" to his son; it is not only moving but strikingly eloquent, in a way that seems to catch the "glory" aspect I have spoken of: "A very nice youth who has lived very close to me, is now at Trinity his name is Burlinson. I have told him to seek you, for I know you will advance him and perhaps be that sun that will usher forth his glories, and for him may that sun never set."

Anstruther writes very discerningly about Browning the philanthropist. I think he is not quite so convincing on Browning and sex. He draws a sharp dividing-line between Browning's relationships with his Day Training School students and those with his other protégés, crediting him with a sort of double life, high-minded in Cambridge and definitely shady in London. There is something not quite right here, I feel, and which seems to tie up with Anstruther's concluding complaint that in spite of the "great advance in understanding of human behaviour since Browning died in 1923" it is impossible to form "a sympathetic, comprehensive and harmonious portrait of him", and his character remains largely inexplicable. Of Browning's love-life, Anstruther writes: "Quite regardless of any of the risks, especially of blackmail and venereal disease... he never paused to reckon the cost." This leads Anstruther to wonder how, in the age of Oscar Wilde, Browning could have got away with what he did; then, at another point, he speculates as to whether Browning was impotent. Venereal disease, impotence, blackmail: somehow these poster-like terrors distract one's mind from the elusive special case. Anyway one detects no whiff of blackmail in Browning's life. When things went wrong between him and one of his protégés, as they sometimes did, the young friend responded not with threats but with tears and heartfelt pleas to be restored to favour. Browning conducted these affairs at the level of the heart, which was probably wise considering his shape; and though he may perhaps have been a lecher and bestowed "prurient embraces" (there is not much hard evidence) what looms much more plainly to us is that he was a jilt.

There was, indeed, just a hint of the *grande cocotte* about him. It is a nice touch that, having been sacked from Eton for parading the young Curzon round in his carriage (another pretext was found for the sacking, but this was his real crime), he was able to reverse the situation thirty years later, being paraded round Calcutta, like some corpulent *begum*, by Curzon in his carriage, the Viceregal one.

Browning's two inspirations were Napoleon and George Eliot. We have noted one Napoleonic trait; others were his imperial ambition and his certainty of always being right. How much of his life and character comes together in the story of his prostate gland. He had long told his English doctors that there was something wrong with it; also that it was giving him libidinous thoughts (which after all may have been quite true and a point worth considering). It was only in Rome in 1913, though, that he succeeded in having it removed. It proved greatly enlarged, indeed (as one might have expected) quite majestic, weighing 220 grams; and he posted it home in triumph to his Bexhill doctor, telling him he had never felt better in his life. Right once again!

As for George Eliot, her advice to him was not to think too much about the afterlife and not to read on traps, and he obeyed her in both; becoming interested in spiritualism in his later years and going to great lengths to arrange that his ashes should come back to England in the diplomatic bag. But at least the old lion-hunter and collector of potentates greeted his approaching end with a fine last "spore". His parting words to Bessie Wingfield-Stuart, by the Tiber, were: "Yes, Death is a nice, friendly old fellow. I know him very well. And I shan't be at all sorry to see him."

When in Naples . . .

Brian Fothergill

COLIN SIMPSON
Emma: The Life of Lady Hamilton
224pp. Bodley Head, £9.95.
0370309847

Lady Hamilton has had more books written about her than either her career or her personality deserves. She was a rather stupid, over-enthusiastic, slightly hysterical woman whose influence upon people generally left them worse off, both financially and morally, than they had been before they met her. Both Lord Nelson and her husband Sir William would have bequeathed a more honourable legacy to history had she never crossed their paths; but she was a beautiful woman, possessing the *don fatal* to a remarkable degree, and its fascination is felt by posterity as much as it was by her contemporaries. Colin Simpson's book at least has the advantage that it does not indulge in the art of whitewashing; we have Emma, Nelson, Hamilton and the King and Queen of Naples "warts and all", related in a refreshingly brisk manner.

Though the publishers claim in the blurb that the author has assembled a "mass of new material" he has in fact little to add to the main outlines of the story, and gives no references to indicate where or how his new material is deployed. His narrative, however, is well presented and clearly written within the limits of a short study. He avoids the pitfalls of over-adulation on the one hand and trendy denigration on the other, and makes no attempt to gloss over or explain away the more squalid episodes in Emma's adventurous career, especially her dubious involvement in the suppression of the Neapolitan revolution. If he has a fault it is in correcting the spelling in Emma's letters, for her quaint orthography brings her correspondence vividly to life. He also at times unnecessarily edits her letters and changes the order of the words, or leaves out passages without any indication. The famous "I am almost distracted. I have never heard from Sir H and he

is not at Lechster now, I am sure. What shall I do? Good God! What shall I do?" becomes in this book the more ladylike "I am almost distracted. I've never heard from Sir Harry and he is not at Uppark I am sure. What shall I do? Good God what shall I do?" Later in quoting a letter to Charles Greville of August 1787, Simpson omits half an Italian sentence that weakens the point that Emma is making.

If Simpson gives us a readable and unromanticized account of Emma's life, he falls down on the general historical background and some of the peripheral details. He seems to be under the impression that George III was the son of George II and that Sir William Hamilton's mother was the mistress of "The Prince of Wales, later George III", whereas her supposed lover was Frederick, George II's son. He makes the strange statement that "Naples had already been a Spanish province for generations when in 1700 Carlos III of Spain created his third son Ferdinand its King" when in fact in 1700 Carlos III was not born, let alone his son Ferdinand. Carlos (born 1716) was king of Naples before he became king of Spain, and prior to his seizure of the throne in 1734 the country had been ruled by Austria since the treaty of Utrecht. Simpson refers to Ferdinand as "Spanish born" and to Sir John Acton as "English born" though the former was born in Italy and the latter in France. He would also have us believe that William Beckford, when scheming to get a peerage for Sir William, "suggested that somehow Hamilton, with Nelson's assistance, could get himself made the heir of Hamilton's eldest brother, the Duke of Hamilton" with whom Beckford, he says, was not on speaking terms. The duke actually was not Sir William's brother at all and was on perfectly friendly terms with Beckford, whose daughter he later married. Nor would anyone thoroughly familiar with the *dramatis personae* of the period hint that the sculptress Mrs Damer had been a "friend" in the romantic sense with Sir William, for this lady, a cousin of Horace Walpole's, was well known for her lesbian attachments.

Hegel

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Troubled waters

D. W. Bowett

D. P. O'CONNELL
The International Law of the Sea: Volume 1.
Edited by I. A. Shearer
634pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £40.
019825346 X

When he died in 1979, at the age of fifty-four, D. P. O'Connell was the holder of the Chichele Chair of International Law at Oxford. The publication of this first volume of a two-volume work on the law of the sea has been the charge of one of his former pupils, Professor I. A. Shearer of Sydney University. It has been his task to gather together O'Connell's many writings on the law of the sea, his manuscripts for new sections of the work, and up-date the work to the end of 1981.

O'Connell was a New Zealander by birth, but an academic at Adelaide from 1953 to 1972 before he came to Oxford. His interests, outside the law, were in history (he wrote a biography of Richelieu) and the navy (he was a Commander in the Australian Naval Reserve). These interests are manifest in this work.

His approach to most legal issues is historical. Whether dealing with the historical evolution of the general principles of the law of the sea or quite specific questions, such as the extent of territorial waters, the regime of bays, innocent passage or fishery zones, his analysis always involves a detailed examination of the history of the matter before he essays a commentary on the contemporary law. It is an approach which will irritate some readers. The new states of Africa and Asia are unlikely to be interested in, or impressed by, the great doctrinal controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which Grotius, Selden,

Godolphin, Kestner, among many others, played so prominent a part. Nor will they care much for the quaint practices of states in the seventeenth century, such as the claim by the Crown to the "King's Chambers". Yet O'Connell is right. For the reason of the rule is explicable most commonly in historical terms, and only in those terms.

Moreover, O'Connell is not just a historian. He tries to grapple with the new knowledge which must be understood by any good international lawyer. His discussion of the legal regime of the seabed is prefaced by a discussion of the contribution of two branches of earth sciences – geology and geophysics – to the definition of that area of the seabed which, as a "natural prolongation" of the land-mass, may attach to a coastal state *ipso jure*. His conclusion that scientists cannot define, precisely, where continental crust ends and oceanic crust begins, was perhaps predictable. Yet this is not because he believes, complacently, that the lawyers have the answer. In fact, his real conclusion is that all these legal concepts have an essentially political purpose, and the lawyers, in recognizing this, must recognize the limitations to their own science, if this is conceived as the rather mechanical application of rules to the facts. Thus, in a striking comment on "historic waters", a concept generally assumed to rest on historical evidence of claims made, and acquiesced in, over long periods, he says, "it is likely that the category of historic waters will change its fundamental character, so that history will play a less prominent role than one would reasonably expect, and strategic and economic factors a much greater one... the expression 'historic bays' will be retained only as a label for 'vital bays'." This is precisely what is happening. How else would one explain China's claim to treat Pohai Bay as internal

waters, or the Libyan claim to the Gulf of Sirte? In short, the concept is itself changing and O'Connell, for all his predilections for history, is quick to recognize that this exclusively historical basis for the concept is disappearing.

Thus, a key to an understanding of what is now happening to the law of the sea lies in the political – and economic – forces which now shape the claims of states to jurisdiction and control over the seas and their resources. The extension of the territorial sea from three to twelve miles, the new claims to a two-hundred miles Exclusive Economic Zone, to a continental shelf to the outer edge of the continental margin, to archipelagic status, to jurisdiction over pollution and scientific research: these are all explicable as extensions of power so as to control activities and resources. As O'Connell says in his preface, "national policies on the law of the sea are a compound of interests which often are basically irreconcilable". Yet the seemingly endless series of negotiations of the UN Law of the Sea Conference did, in fact, end in 1982 with what many had hoped would be a reconciliation of these conflicting national interests: a "package deal", in the form of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. O'Connell did not live to

see the rejection of this package by the Reagan Administration, and by governments like our own. The facts have been noted by Professor Shearer, as part of the up-dating process. However, we lack O'Connell's view on what the position now is. Can the non-signatories, like the US and UK, accept some of the package but not the rest? Can they independently authorize the mining of the deep seabed, beyond national jurisdiction, which the Convention vests in the new international authority as "the common heritage of mankind" or would that be an illegal act of trespass? These are the new questions and to these, unfortunately, O'Connell provides no answers.

Nevertheless, no one looking for the answers can safely overlook this massive work. When the second volume is published it will present a body of knowledge which is impressive in its range and indispensable to the researcher. It may also help the layman and the student to understand what international law is about (even though the book deals with only one part of that law). It is certainly about things that matter and any reader will quickly understand why international lawyers have been asked by students to demonstrate the "relevance" of what they teach.

Emptying the prisons

A. W. B. Simpson

MICK RYAN
The Politics of Penal Reform
150pp. Longman. Paperback, £3.95.
0582295394

The Politics of Penal Reform is part of the "Politics Today" series, of which six volumes have so far been published and six more are to come; the series is a scaled-down continuation of Fontana's "Political Issues in Modern Britain", likewise edited by Bernard Crick and Patrick Seyd. The text starts with a historical account of the penal system of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (I am not sure if Scotland is covered or not) since 1945. This is followed by a discussion of the institutions involved in the development of penal policy, such as the Home Office, and such pressure groups as the Howard League and Radical Alternatives to Imprisonment. The book concludes with a brief discussion of the possibilities of reducing the size of the prison population, and adds a useful short bibliography, which would have been more useful still if it had included references to the more important official publications which anyone interested in the subject needs to read.

It is unfortunate for the author that his book came out before the new Home Secretary set out at the Conservative Party Conference his plan to reduce the prison population while buying the political support he requires by promising to look up the worst offenders for longer terms. But Mick Ryan has produced a readable little book, and there is no claim to political neutrality in the writing, which belongs to the world of the *Guardian*. Indeed, the editors make a particular point of this aspect of the series, saying brightly: "Politics is too important for neutrality"; but adding, puzzlingly, "but therefore demanding of objectivity".

The main thrust of Mr Ryan's argument is against the use of imprisonment as a penal sanction; it is, in the prisons which everyone concedes, are in an awful state, that he locates the supposed crisis in the penal system, and this crisis, in its turn, presented as a consequence of a recent move towards a more authoritarian policing of an increasingly divided society. This sort of explanation, which in some circles is standard, derives whatever plausibility it possesses from the adoption of a very short historical time-scale. There have, it is true, been periods of official satisfaction with the penal system in the past (its subjects were not consulted), but they have been unbroken by a more normal state of affairs. The present crisis has been created by the relentless rise both in crime as known to and recorded by the police and in the prison population, notwithstanding the dramatic reduction in the use of imprisonment by the courts. If they still need

imprisonment to the extent which was usual fifty years ago, heaven knows what the state of the prisons would now be. The only serious humanitarian measure to deal with the problem of the prisons is to operate a one-out system (exempting only specially dangerous prisoners) but, public opinion apart, the judiciary would die in the ditch to prevent this.

Against this background of crime, what has put penology into a state of emergency has been the collapse of the belief in rehabilitation and reform. This has been accompanied by an increasing pessimism in official and intellectual circles about the actual achievements of the movement to place penology on a scientific basis, and, using hard empirical data, to form both the policy-makers and the courts. Ryan is himself affected by this pessimism, and reflects the tendency to criticize the penal system in terms of ethical notions – typically, human rights – instead of in terms of supposed scientific theories of efficiency. In retrospect, indeed, much of the penological research which has been published in modern times looks like going the way of Lombroso's criminal types. Thus the concentration of effort on measuring the effects of penal measures on convicted individuals, typically judged by conviction rates, may well have been quite fundamentally misconceived. Put crudely, national justice systems ought not to be judged by their effects on criminals, but on society generally, and we are at the present uncertain as to how such a judgment could be made. The system of public opinion on the operation of the penal system, about which a little is known, is one of the many areas which deserve fuller enquiry. We are ever to begin to assess the system and more fruitful way.

There are signs of changes in the direction of research – for example, attempts to discover the size of the dark figure of unrecorded crime – but we still need far more information on the very mundane character on how the penal system actually works. For example, there are massive gaps in understanding the operation of policing, and its relationship with the courts, the payment of imprisonment fees, and other aspects of the exploitative nature of crime. How a penal policy can be developed in ignorance of the workings of this aspect of the system is problematic. So far as the operation of the pressure groups involved in the penal system is concerned, Mr Ryan might perhaps have directed more attention to the shadowy role of the Law Society and senior judiciary in the present political negotiation. His short and impressionistic discussion of the continuing role of penology may help to generate a more informed interest in the problems involved. At present, no obvious coalition of forces is at work, and the same time a more humane attitude to the inmates of our prisons

Calling in the Mafia

Julian Symons

JAMES LEASOR
Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes?
240pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
004410292

"As he shook Jack's hand with forced heartiness, he found himself imagining Jack caressing Carole, holding her, touching her, as she liked to be touched."

Steady there: has the wrong book got between the dust wrappers that ask: "Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes?" Try again:

"I thought I'd play a round of golf before lunch," he said diffidently, prepared to abandon the proposition if it caused displeasure.

"You do that," the Duchess replied. "I'll go out to lunch. There will be ten tonight for dinner." Let the butler.

That was the Duke and Duchess of Windsor talking, with James Leasor presumably a mosquito on the wall. But this still seems to have little connection with the question about Sir Harry Oakes. What does that question mean, and how does Jack's caressing of Carole and the Windsors' imagined conversation help to answer it?

Oakes was a gold prospector who had made a fortune when he found what was said to be the second richest goldfield in the world in Ontario. He had come to live in the Bahamas in the 1930s to avoid income tax, and in his nine years there had spent and given money lavishly to help the islands. On a July night in 1943 he was murdered, his body found the following morning in his bedroom, partly burned but still perfectly recognizable. He had been killed by a blow to the head causing a brain haemorrhage. His friend Harold Christie, a local estate agent who had stayed the night, found the body on the following morning. He had heard nothing during the night. The Duke of Windsor, Governor General of the Bahamas, took a personal hand in the enquiry, which was natural enough since he was friendly with Oakes. He telephoned Miami to ask for Captains Barker and

Melchen, respectively fingerprint and homicide experts, to handle the case.

Within days the two detectives had ordered the arrest of Oakes's son-in-law, a fast-talking playboy named Alfred de Marigny. He was acquitted after a trial at which the "experts" were shown to be ludicrously inefficient. The prime evidence against Marigny was a print said to have been found on a screen in Oakes's bedroom. Barker had left his fingerprint camera in Miami, and so lifted the prints, some on to rubber which destroyed the originals. The screen print was one of those lifted on to rubber, and there was only Barker's word that he had ever existed on the screen. He also wrongly identified the place where he had allegedly found the print, and was unable even to say which way the finger was pointing. Melchen had been mistaken, or had lied, about other matters. The defence counsel plainly accused these expert witnesses of perjury. The crime remained unsolved.

The first chapters of Mr Leasor's book tell the story of the crime and the trial straightforwardly enough, although with the omission of some important points. One of them was the discovery by Major Pemberton, head of the local CID, of a towel with bloodstains on it in Christie's room, and his strange forcefulness about this in the Magistrates' Court hearing. The account of the case in the later chapters, however, seems to be almost complete fiction. Taking as his guide a remark made by Eric Stanley Gardner, who reported the trial, that facts should never spoil a good story, Leasor has used "facts since made available in Washington and elsewhere", and added "some conjectures" to put together "a possible answer" to the puzzle. The answer is written in a style that might be the tenth carbon copy of a book written by Harold Robbins with the advice of Mario Puzo.

The "possible answer" runs like this. The Outfit, for which read Cosa Nostra or the Mafia, is eager to get a stake in the Bahamas. "They're a natural", Meyer Lansky tells the imprisoned Lucky Luciano at a time when the

Italian is still languishing in jail. They will build a hotel there, fly in "plane-loads of suckers for a weekend of gambling", enlarge the business over the years. Their emissary is Frank Marshall, his contact in Nassau that Jack whom Frank imagines caressing his former girl friend Carole. There is a snag, however, in that gambling is forbidden by Bahamian law. Through the Mafia, Marshall tries to blackmail the three men on the island whose agreement to the hotel project is vital: Christie, Oakes and the Duke of Windsor. Christie was a former bootlegger, and all three had been involved in deals with a pro-Nazi millionaire named Axel Wenner-Gren. "Would the former King of England really like the world to think that while his country was fighting for its life, he could conceivably be involved with a known Nazi sympathizer?" Marshall says to Jack. When the three potential victims talk about the threat, Christie is inclined to agree. If such material was given to Walter Winchell for his column, the results would be appalling. "Think what the Duchess would say," Oakes, however, stands out against the scheme, and so seals his fate. Marshall arranges for him to be drugged, and under a pretext takes him out to a launch moored off an island just outside Nassau. There is an argument, and Oakes is hit on the head with wrench by an (unnamed) engineer on the launch. This is the fatal blow. Marshall, Jack and the engineer take Oakes back to his house. Christie accompanies them. He is told to go to bed in his room, and the others then pour petrol from the boat over the corpse and set it alight, presumably hoping to conceal the fact of murder.

Such is the Leasor version, which contains several grace-notes like a telephone-call to the Duke on the following morning by somebody with an American accent who says that "it would be advisable if United States police carried out the investigation", and names Barker and Melchen as candidates. The Duke, who remembers Melchen from a visit to Miami, obediently picks up the telephone to ask for them.

It may be that facts should never spoil a good story, but they are disastrous to such inferior fiction. It is true that there are problems in the Oakes case that have never been solved, like Pemberton's strange failure of memory, and the fact that such a poor job was made of burning the body when the murderer(s) had most of the night at their disposal. There must certainly be strong suspicion that Christie (who later became Sir Harold) had a part in the crime, or at least knew more about it than he ever told. None of this implies acceptance of Leasor's farrago, a piece of work all the more distasteful because of the insistence that important aspects of it use "facts since made available in Washington and elsewhere". What facts? There are certainly what one supposes to be facts, for example in various memos quoted that relate to Wenner-Gren, but they do not in any way authenticate the Leasor version, nor of course do they justify the invented conversations attributed to the Windsors and many others. Two pages of bibliography list the numbers of papers from the Public Record Office and the National Archives at Washington, but no indication is given of what, if any, information they contain directly relevant to the Oakes murder. Some of the books included, like the Duke's *A King's Diary*, do not mention Oakes's name. There is one, however, to which Leasor owes a considerable debt. This is Marshall Houts's *King's X*, published in the US in 1972, in which the theory was advanced that Oakes had been killed by a lieutenant of Meyer Lansky. The theory is based on the evidence of an unnamed informant. When Houts's book appeared in Britain four years later the title was changed, and became *Who Killed Sir Harry Oakes?*

Jonathan Goodman's anthology *The Pleasures of Murder* (208pp. Alison and Busby. £8.95. 0 85031 512 3) contains descriptions of twenty celebrated murder cases, among them "a Bloody Murder in Fig-lane near St. Pancras Church" in 1685 and "A Massacre in Massachusetts", as related by Thoreau in 1849.

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JOHN FLOOD
Barristers' Clerks: The Law's Middlemen
164pp. Manchester: University Press. £17.50.
0719009286

This little book is lively, amusing, and intellectually honest. It is by no means as weighty in content as its price implies, but barristers and their clerks would enjoy reading it all the more for that. Saving only the sexism of the title (middle people or go-betweens would have more appropriately designated that quarter of senior clerks in the provinces who are, it seems, female) there is very little to take issue with.

The tone is set by a dust-jacket cartoon in which a clerk, with just the right hint of upward mobility in the hair-cut and attire, and bearing a smile of what can only be described as deferential smugness, manipulates a puppet barrister while the curious judge peers down. At the end the author describes, disarmingly, how under the sponsorship of a senior clerk called George he gradually came to be known to and trusted by the clerks of the Temple, playing in their football team, drinking in their pubs, and even taking on the job for a time. As a result, on account of the problems which arise which even the tightest rule, and which happily, the author has not academically butterfessed away, by letting prior conceptualizations intrude upon his story, he prospectively by constructing an elaborate theorization of his account too heavy for this book to bear. The book is modest in the best possible sense of that term.

In the first two chapters John Flood presents basic information about what the clerks are, where they work, what they earn, and what opportunities and risks a career in clerking involves. We move imperceptibly from a discussion of the scanty literature to accounts and comments from the clerks themselves.

Thus out of the way, Flood moves on to describe the tensions inherent in the clerical-like combination of high power and low status with which the clerks confront their barristers. There are times when the barrister's deferential mode of address is barely sufficient to paper over the anger a clerk feels when, for

example, a barrister wantonly throws away a fee by failing to ring in for a brief, or by frequently changing the date for a consultation, to the great inconvenience of the only source of work, the solicitor.

Clerks' lives are ruled by status, by the diary, by business-getting, and by camaraderie, not necessarily in that order. Status, explicitly revealed in the niceties of modes of address ("If I call him mister you call him sir; if I call him sir, you don't speak"), governs relationships within the clerks' office as well as between them and the two branches of the legal profession whose relationships they mediate.

The diary rules the office because clashes must be reduced to a minimum to keep solicitors happy while the income (and status) of both clerk and barrister requires that as many cases as possible be packed into a week. The account of the jockeying for position during lating sessions at the courts is reminiscent less of a horse-race than of trying to make oneself heard in a cup-final crowd.

Business-getting means keeping solicitors happy, which means perhaps being more honest with them about the skills of the people in your chambers than the latter would like. It may mean discriminating against black or women barristers in the fear of displeasing your solicitor. It also involves doing what you can to make sure that your barristers (to the line) herein like the ambiguity, for clerks depend on their barristers' skills, while the latter depend on their clerks, as pupils for their very start in life, and always for enough cases, good enough cases, and a fair estimation of their personal worth in the fee which the clerk fixes.

The wheels of these processes are oiled by the camaraderie between clerks, which is more readily apparent than the inter-chamber rivalry that also forms part of the job. In the pubs of the Temple reputations are made and unmade by the gossip of the clerks. But this is not idle malice: Clerks need this "knowledge" and the give-and-take between their offices, which personal friendships make possible, in order to carry out their many and contradictory tasks.

In thus presenting a clerical eye-view of the world Flood has done us proud. Is it churlish to ask if the layman's eye-view of such strategies as packing a day with last-minute briefs might be different? And would it be beyond the wit of sociology to find out?

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JAMES THORPE
John Milton: The Inner Life
191pp. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.
0873280792

"The Inner Life"? Do not for a moment suppose that Milton is about to be caught out engaged in diabolic practices or in proffering Eden-red apples to under-age Eves. James Thorpe is a gentleman-scholar, and the burden of his distinctly old-fashioned essay is that Milton believed in God. Perhaps we do need reminding of this; and if so, then preferably by someone who quotes well, at times almost too well for Milton's comfort. Certainly we shall never see Milton as in any way "humble" unless we recognize the force of that belief and its immediate implications.

Milton's belief in God marched with a belief in himself. Thus, in *Defence of Himself*: "Singular indeed is the favour of God towards me, that He has called me above all others to the defence of liberty . . ."; and in *Second Defence of the English People*: "I have been aided and enriched by the favour and assistance of God. Anything greater or more glorious than this I neither can, nor wish to, claim." The limitation ostensibly set upon self-esteem by that last sentence would be comical in anyone else. Even his blindness was an enrichment – "Through this infirmity I can be completed, perfected; in this darkness I can be filled with light" – as everything given by God (at least to his faithful servants) must self-evidently be. Logic was one of Milton's strong points – as we observe in the no doubt false and wicked but engagingly "human" logic which he so skillfully ascribes to the Fallen Angel.

Thorpe lists a trinity of "informing values", of which Milton's sense of his relationship to God is the first. The second is the sense of his relationship to his country, and the third is his sense of his relationship to his art. These three values, of philosophy, mathematics and music – that Milton deemed only proper: an idea remote from later and (if one dare use the slippery adjective) "romantic" notions of the poet as a sort of inspired word-processor with no need to know the history that lies just behind the words. Third is Milton's sense of virtue, as most famously present in his declaration, in *An Apology for Smectymnus*, that he who hopes to write well "in laudable things" ought himself to be "a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things". Again, romantic (though not necessarily Romantic) expectations are very different, the poet being seen as a composition and pattern of the worst disasters, preferably spread lavishly around. The devil has come to have practically all the best tunes – a judgment one is tempted to apply to *Paradise Lost*, since no one has conclusively demolished Blake's view of the matter, the view held with differing emphases

by Byron, Shelley and William Empson among others: and this despite all the theological arguments, and (come to that) despite Milton's faith in God. Truly to love Milton's God you need to be unfallen.

On the question of liberty, Thorpe indicates that for Milton this necessarily was linked with God: in brief, men should be free to serve God. Liberty from God was no more envisaged than – and perhaps it is only now that one can say this without sounding utterly idiotic – the ringing tones of *Areopagitica* were intended to cheer the ears of the pornographer. As for fame, it is a mere "blaze", merely "the people's praise", and what matters is how the all-judging Judge "pronounces lastly on each deed". Even so, Milton would desire fame since it enhanced his effectiveness as a servant of God. (Today he would be seen and heard on TV.)

Apropos of Milton's self-esteem, his declared opinion of himself, Thorpe remarks that "the unusual degree of his straightforwardness may lead us (if we are not careful) to a harsher judgment of him than the facts warrant". We shall need to be very careful. You not only may but you should blow your own trumpet when you have good cause to blow it (and not leave the best tunes to the devil). False modesty is false, the more so when it has to do with "liberty's defence, my noble task, / Of which all Europe talks from side to side". After all, Mil-

ton was right: right in believing not only that he was primarily a poet but also (we take it) that primarily he was writing to the greater glory of God. And of course he backed up his self-esteem with unimpeachable courage and fortitude: there was no feather-bedding there.

Thorpe reminds us that those were robust times, and in verbal warfare one wanted not nuance but a clashing of swords and bucklers and a full-lunged blowing of trumpets. "Political pamphlets of the seventeenth century are not the place to look for modesty." When you are writing not simply *pro populo anglicano* but also on behalf of the Almighty you do not mince matters, you make mincemeat of your opponents. All of this is logical enough, yet one may still wonder which came first: was it that Milton believed in God or that Milton believed in Milton (and believed that God did too)? The old riddle of the hen and the egg, it must seem. There is, it appears to me, a suggestion of uncertainty about Milton's expressions of self-esteem – he protests a little too much – while passages in his polemical works make the God of *Paradise Lost* seem a fairly mild, cool fellow after all.

Thorpe must have nodded off when his pen committed this notable understatement: "From the tone that Milton usually adopted in his essays, and the frequency with which he adopted it, he seems to have had a love of controversy and an eagerness to take sides in a

Sublimely humble

Andrew Motion

ERIC ROBINSON (Editor)
John Clare's Autobiographical Writings
185pp. Oxford University Press. £7.95.
0192137742

In his essay "An Unfinished Perspective" Robinson tells us that the journey which took him through John Clare's home village of Helpston: "It was all over in seconds, that glimpse of the confined prospect of a great poet, but not before I had been reminded that he had thrived for only as long as he had been contained within those flat, village boundaries . . . His essential requirements in landscape were minimal and frugal, like those of certain plants which do best in a narrow plot of unchanged soil." In at least one obvious respect, Clare's *Autobiographical Writings* compellingly reinforces this impression: the book concludes with his classic evocation of exile and homecoming, *Journey out of Essex*, in which he reconstructs his harrowing, fugitive trek from the asylum at High Beach back to Northamptonshire. But on almost all the previous pages, which contain the *Sketches* Clare prepared for his publisher John Taylor, and the further autobiographical "Fragments" Eric Robinson has culled from Clare's

writings, we find the same need for fixity in one known and particular place. It is not just that Clare's experiences all refer to his feelings for Helpston, but that Helpston itself is described in astonishingly minute detail.

To say that Clare celebrates what is remote and isolated is to imply (rightly) the intensely democratic range of his interests. His prose, like his poetry, exemplifies that crucial feature of Romanticism. But for Clare – as it never was in the same way for, say, Wordsworth – the fascination of what is normally overlooked lies partly in an urgent psychological need to feel secure. Even in the most general terms, the world at large seemed full of threats (many of these fears were confirmed during his trips to London once he had become a celebrity), and as soon as enclosures began to disturb the pattern of his life at home, not even Helpston seemed entirely safe. It is not surprising, therefore, to find him returning again and again in his writing to scenes that are expressly and assuagingly local; and to components of those scenes which are themselves diminutive. Insects, for example, or snails, or small birds all come in for special attention – partly because he relishes their obscurity for his own sake, and partly because he can identify with them. Small, to Clare, is not only beautiful, but protective as well. In one fragment, for example, he remembers a nocturnal ramble in precisely these terms: "the white moth had begun to flutter beneath the bushes the black snail was out upon the grass and the frog was leaping across the rabbit tracks on his evening journeys and the little mice was nimbly about and

conflict." In his recent biography of the poet, A. N. Wilson is both more authentic and fierier in his dealings with the polemics. But Thorpe is perceptive in remarking how Satan himself is tempted, tempted to love Adam and Eve and to delight in the beauty of earth, and tempted too to despair. And he is especially interesting on Milton's feelings for nature, his compensating for his reserve towards the world of man by an openness towards the world of nature. Nature showed signs of war when Eve ate the apple, and gave a second groan when Adam followed suit; but she didn't fall, she went on carrying out the will of the Maker.

This is a book which requires (and most of the time possesses) a solemnity of manner and a dignity of language: its author really ought to have avoided such expressions as "social dynamics", "goal-oriented" and "loner". This last word stands in opposition to "member of a family", and much play is made with it. Thorpe uses it, with some but not overwhelming justification, of Comus ("in the pure sense of the word": he isn't even related to his crew of monsters), of Satan ("essentially a loner"), of Christ even (in *Paradise Regained* he is "represented as having some of the qualities of the loner"), and of course of Samson, a victim of what is called in language reminiscent of social welfare "a fractured family". Surely the most touching of the loners, if only a temporary one, is Eve. As for Milton – no, nobody who has God at his side can be said to be that.

twittering their little ear-piercing song with the hedge cricket whispering the hour of waking spirits was at hand".

If Clare were purely and simply a retiring writer, his prose might well not have the touches of greatness that it undoubtedly possesses. His special strength stems from the fact that once he has – so to speak – shut himself into what he calls "the seclusion of the scene" he is able to write with absolute and even dramatic confidence. This is immediately apparent in the syntax and punctuation of his prose (assiduously preserved by Robinson) which was not produced by ignorance or illiteracy, but carefully evolved so as to preserve the rhythms and cadences of authentic speech. It is apparent, too, in the skill with which he presents himself as simultaneously shy and assured. He calls himself, at various times, "timid", "clownish", "very irksome among performers", and refers to his "thoughtless and head-banded proceedings". Yet he also admits: "As to the humble station I have filled in life I need no apology for all tastes are not alike they do not all love to climb the Alps but many content themselves with wandering in the valleys . . . In such a latitude I write not without hopes of enjoying some pleasures for reason on the humble pages I have here written." Eric Robinson has allowed us, at last, fully to appreciate these pleasures, and the paradox upon which they depend. In its absolutely self-flattering way, Clare's humble prose is justly proud of itself: it has just enough sense of the egotistical sublime to combine self-projection with sympathetic self-effacement.

Planter Stock

People look up to me, though I'm falling down,
And wonder why a monkey-puzzle tree.
Chose to ascend from seaweed a hard mountain
Whose gorge-gold standard plunges into scree.

I love old watercolours curlew paint
With iodine on a quill down a glen's throat:
Deplores the weather's poor mouth complaint.
Wear tights and tweed, an ancient ivy coat.

Can't you eat rabbit? Does it make you sick
To find your father's gun-shot in your meat?
Or touch a trout he's caught? You ought to like
Wearing an Eton collar: you look sweet.

All the roots that would pack inside a tea-chest
Came home when we retired from the Far East.

RICHARD MURPHY

Ideal justifications

Colin McGinn

HILARY PUTNAM
Reason and Reason: Philosophical Papers,
Volume 3
312pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50
0521246752

Since the publication in 1975 of Hilary Putnam's second volume of collected papers, he has been changing his views; he has, indeed, been undergoing something of a conversion. As he confesses in the introduction to the present volume, there was a time when he was an unqualified realist, hostile to verificationism in any form; when he believed that reference to things in the world was unproblematic and semantically primary; and when he took truth to consist in a relation of correspondence between thought and a mind-independent world. But now Putnam has come to believe that all this is wrong, or at least highly misleading; the papers collected in this third volume set out to explain why.

There is much to commend in these efforts: his discussion is, as always, lively and stimulating; he takes on the big issues "with uninhibited freshness"; he ingeniously connects what may have seemed like separate questions. There are, however, some regrettable lapses in both conception and presentation: formulations of key positions are obscure and elusive relying upon a liberal use of inverted commas to suggest that more is being meant by the quoted phrase than it literally says; there is a tendency to resort to shrill sloganizing when rigorous argument is what is wanted, possibly as a result of hasty composition; and there are moments of pretentiousness and self-congratulation. The topics treated range widely, from technical issues in quantum physics to meditations upon the place of analytical philosophy in "contemporary culture" – though the issue of realism is the central and recurrent theme.

Putnam's primary target is someone called "the metaphysical realist". This species of philosopher is credited with quite a variety of convictions: he believes in a mind-independent world; he holds a correspondence theory of truth; he thinks there is a unique reference scheme for our language; he supposes there to be a single true theory of the world; he takes truth to outrun even idealized justification; he rejects the idea that we have "direct access" to objects; he cannot tolerate objective vagueness; he prefers ideal languages. Now it may be that there have been (and are) philosophers who have adhered to all these doctrines (Russell is perhaps an example), but it is not to be supposed that there is any logical connection between them – someone could consistently espouse a subset of them without being committed to the whole lot. In particular, I see no reason why someone who believes in a mind-independent world and a non-epistemic notion of truth – surely the core beliefs of "the metaphysical realist" – should find himself saddled with the other doctrines listed. Putnam typically proceeds by attacking some one of these doctrines and taking himself to have thereby undermined the others, thus insinuating guilt by association; whereas what is needed is a careful articulation of distinctions and of the advantages and liabilities of each component of the composite position he opposes. And where Putnam does attempt to show a real theoretical connection, as for example between a correspondence theory of truth and rejection of vague properties, his arguments are quite unconvincing: for the believer in correspondence and vagueness can simply hold that the correspondence relation is itself vague (non-determinate).

But how good are Putnam's arguments against the several doctrines which make up his target? About the idea of a mind-independent world he says some curious things: his chief complaint seems to be that if we locate material objects wholly outside of the mind we go *ipso facto* render them inaccessible to the mind. Putnam thinks that the mind has access only to its own representations, so that if objects are distinct from mental representations the mind cannot reach out and embrace the objects; and if so, there is nothing the mind can do, so to speak, to select a determinate range of objects as the contents of its cognitive acts. To the line of thought one is inclined to

make a short and unsympathetic reply: namely, that an object does not need to be (literally) in the mind in order for it to be capable of coming before the mind. Do we not simply see objects, objects which would exist whether we saw them or not, even though (of course) such objects are not constituents of our minds? The puzzle is to understand why Putnam seemingly commits this *non sequitur*. I suspect he would say that in perception the mind has access to objects only as represented in a certain way, so the short reply has not made sense of the idea of thought about mind-independent objects. But this would be to make the same mistake Berkeley made when arguing that to be is to be perceived. It does not follow from the fact that whenever we conceive of an object the object is conceived that we cannot conceive of what it would be for an object to exist unconceived, since our conceiving of the object need not be part of the content of what we conceive – as when we think of objects as they were before anyone had thought about them. Similarly, what we see need not be mind-dependent just because our seeing it is.

Putnam is clearer about his reasons for doubting the uniqueness of reference (though he tends to conflate this question with the question of whether truth is to be explained in terms of correspondence). His doubts have two sources: the difficulty of finding any suitable relation which could constitute determinate reference; and a technical result in formal logic (the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem) which appears to show that reference can float free of more global properties of a theory (a similar claim has been made by Donald Davidson and John Wallace). One natural reply to these doubts appeals to the relation of causation as what glues words to things in the world. Putnam dismisses this reply: his objection to it is that either it is the claim that our use of the word "causation" fixes the interpretation of "refers", in which case it simply raises the same question about that word; or it is the claim that it is in the nature of causation itself that it determines reference, in which case it is a pernicious form of "medieval essentialism".

Now, plainly, the first version of the causal reply is a non-starter, for the reason Putnam gives, but his quick dismissal of the second version seems unpersuasive. For consider any question about the uniqueness and determinacy of a relation – spatial or familial relations, say – and try applying Putnam's arguments. Certainly our use of words for these relations will not settle their identity if the words have indeterminate reference; but why should it be thought objectionable "medieval essentialism" to take these relations as primitive features of the world, or to reduce them to other such relations? Putnam's dilemmatic argument thus appears to prove too much: it threatens to make all relations indeterminate. I would suggest that it is at least the beginning of a reply to Putnam to see linguistic reference as constrained by more basic natural relations in which one stands to one's environment – acting upon it, being acted upon by it, having one's goals fulfilled by objects in it, and so on. Perhaps Putnam's difficulties stem from assuming an over "intellectualist" conception of reference; the problem starts to look less real when we remember the representational states of animals and infants.

The view with which Putnam would supplant metaphysical realism he labels "internal realism". Internal realism regards truth as not transcending idealized justification (hence "internal") while insisting that there is more to truth than believed truth (hence "realism"). Thus the normativity of truth is preserved, along with its transcendence of what is presently assertible, while the metaphysical realist's conception of truth as quite independent of our capacities for justification is repudiated ("external anti-realism" would I think be an equally apt name for this view).

Internal realism is unfortunately somewhat under-characterized by Putnam, and it invites questions he does little or nothing to answer. The crucial question concerns the nature of the idealization: does he intend the idealization to be over our actual capacities for verification, or does he mean to abstract away from these to the condition of some kind of ideal knower? The indications are that he means the former, in which case there is a threat of an unaccept-

able relativism in the resulting notion of truth, since what is (is not) justifiable by the exercise of our actual capacities may not (may) be justifiable by the exercise of capacities possessed by other knowing beings – in other words, truth becomes relative to a species. According to internal realism, man is the measure of all things, but Martians and monkeys have their own measures, and the measures might give different results. But if Putnam wishes to avoid such relativism in the notion of truth, by precluding from our actual capacities for knowledge, he will run the risk of rendering his position vacuous: if God is the shape the idealization takes, then it is not clear that this is not metaphysical realism by another name. It seems to me that this is a dilemma any equation of truth with justification must confront, and Putnam says nothing to show how internal realism escapes being impaled on it.

Putnam makes some surprising claims about the relation between metaphysical realism and the concept of necessity (notably in "Why There isn't a Ready-made World"). He tells us that a consistent metaphysical realist cannot reject essential properties because such a realist needs to hold that there is an essential or intrinsic relation between thought and its objects. Putnam's reason for saying this is, apparently, that the metaphysical realist requires something ("metaphysical glue") to tie words and concepts to things outside the mind. I see no force whatever in this contention: what the metaphysical realist requires (as Putnam here describes him) is just uniqueness, not necessity – something that singles a reference relation out in the actual world. That our thoughts could have different objects in other possible worlds does not show that they fail to have unique reference in the actual world.

This puzzling claim is followed up with the suggestion that the most prominent contemporary form of metaphysical realism, viz materialism, is incompatible with an objectivist conception of necessity – indeed that it is incompatible with the notion of objective causal

explanation. This incompatibility is supposed to follow from the (alleged) fact that these concepts are not strictly definable in the vocabulary of physics – terms for mass, charge, etc. But that is surely an unreasonable demand to impose upon the materialist: it would prevent him employing arithmetical concepts, or temporal concepts, or indeed the concepts of ordinary logic. What the materialist characteristically holds is that there are no irreducibly mental (including semantic) facts; he is under no obligation to provide a physicalist definition of every concept to which he appeals. Thus a materialist will typically claim that all events have physical causes and that everything has a physical explanation; he does not need to make the further claim that causation and explanation themselves have strict physical definitions.

Not all of this book is concerned with realism; it also treats of reason. And here too Putnam has changed his views: he used to hold (with Quine) that no propositions are rationally unrevocable – anything we now believe we can envisage rationally giving up as theory develops. Now Putnam is prepared to allow that there are absolutely unrevocable beliefs, notably the minimal principle of non-contradiction, "not every proposition is both true and false". To give up this principle would simply be to cease to reason, so there is no sense in the idea of rationally abandoning the principle. This certainly seems to me like a step in the right direction, though it must be said that Putnam offers rather little in the way of a detailed articulation of why reason should enjoy such absolute presuppositions. (This type of unrevocability thesis has also been put forward and developed by the Danish philosopher Peter Zinkernagel, but Putnam evidently does not know of his work.)

Putnam's new views are manifestly still in their formative phase; it is to be hoped that future work will clarify and sharpen his position, but I suspect that once the process of critical reflection has been pushed further, we shall witness yet another change of view.

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Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

If we follow the horticultural imagery favoured by the chief spokesmen of the Arts Council, then a pestilential blight threatens to lay waste the sheltered walks and quiet groves of the subsidized arts in this country. Chairman Sir William Rees-Mogg speaks of cutting out the dead wood; Secretary-General Luke Rittner suggests thinning the seed-bed to give more room. But the entire field of arts subsidy lies under a far greater threat than that of the Council's prim secateurs.

There can be no doubt that there is panic in the arts world about the economic future. The Arts Council itself has added to the alarm by announcing that it is conducting a major review of its policies. Its 250 major clients have until the end of the year to reply to two equally piercing questions: what would you do with 25 per cent more money, and how would you manage on 25 per cent less?

Both the questions posed in the letter are of course hypothetical, but the prospect of a 25 per cent cut seems nearer reality. The letter warns that by April 1, 1984, the Arts Council will have decided which of its clients will "have their grants increased, reduced or indeed terminated altogether". Those on the condemned list will have one further year of subsidy before the spring bonfires of 1985. Sir William Rees-Mogg has reinforced the estate-management imagery of the times by saying that organizations on an Arts Council grant can no longer imagine that they will be "getting it for ever - like a freehold".

Yet this flurry of activity by the Arts Council is being seen as no more than a manoeuvre in the face of far more dire consequences that will be the result of government policy. The idea that the arts can be protected from cuts was exploded last August when the Council was forced, as Sir William put it, "to break its committed word to its clients" by a mid-term one per cent cut in this year's overall grant. The Arts Council's position is now clearly over, while local government re-organization, outlined in *Streamlining the Cities*, threatens to devastate subsidized cultural life.

The Arts Council is under pressure in detail as well as in gross. A parliamentary select committee recommended last Autumn that there should be a double diminution in its powers: first by a greater devolution to the Regional Arts Associations, and second by government earmarking of specific sums for the great national companies that flourish above the rest. This second proposal has been reinforced by two special investigations by the management expert Clive Priestley into the Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Both, he concludes, need extra money, but he is critical of the Council's administration, and suggests that future grants should be decided by the government, leaving the Arts Council as at best a clearing house.

In the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty, I turned to the Minister for the Arts himself, the forty-four-year-old Lord Gowrie. He too is taken with horticultural imagery. In a recent interview with himself published in *Arts and Artists* he reminds us that he is only in charge of "a small part of the total arts estate... the manner in which I am determined to keep the building in good repair. But it is to add to the rest of the team will have to generate the income".

Only a Minister with a literary background would have the wit to cast an article in the form of a self-interrogation. On his appointment to Mrs Thatcher's post-election government, we were reminded of his volume of verse *A Portrait of Don Giovanni* (1972) and his Lectureship in English and American Literature at UCL. (For that matter, he was once a sub on the TES.) But Gowrie has also been a Conservative Whip and has served in the Northern Ireland Office, altogether a more serious affair than dealing with the arts. At present not only is he Minister for Arts and Libraries, he is also Minister for the Civil Service, and spokesman in the House of Lords both for Employment and the Treasury.

As a politician he is aware of the significance of heading an independent Ministry with direct access to Mrs Thatcher, even if it is not of

cabinet rank. He is also aware of his collective responsibility in a government dedicated to cutting public expenditure, and sees no contradiction in his role as a Treasury spokesman. Indeed, his offices are now in the Treasury building. "The Arts Minister is only supposed to talk about more - and I think I have got it - but I must give a clear signal that there is a concerted view on the balance between levels of public spending and inflation."

That signal was very clearly given when his first action as spending Minister was to postpone the building of the Theatre Museum and impose a one per cent cut on all his cultural clients. He argues that there was no choice, and the cuts had to be right across the board. The Chancellor had not time for lengthy negotiations. "In effect he had to put off the summer holidays, because the money for them had already been spent." He is aggrieved by his unpopularity for this, for the cut in the arts was to have been two per cent. "Unlike most people, I think I did rather well."

The real test of his ministerial clout will be the figure settled on for next year's Arts Council grant. Since this should be announced in mid-December, I was talking to him at a sensitive time. It is thought that he may achieve a five per cent increase on last year's original sum - thus at least restoring the mid-term cut. Lord Gowrie was cautious: "the present level of funding will continue on the present baseline. We want to improve it somewhat, but the growth must come from outside." Which, being interpreted, sounds like a standstill for the Arts Council, since even allowing for a small increase, inflation has once more moved the goal-post.

Lord Gowrie accepts Sir William Rees-Mogg's criticism that "the Government has made the Council's finance unreliable", and he hopes that "unfortunate" mid-term cuts won't ever happen again. He also agrees with Sir William's comment about subsidy being no longer freehold. "All public spending is leasehold and I think it is a fairly timely reminder."

How the Council spends the money once it is handed over is their affair, but in spite of his remarks about being "a less-government man" I got the impression that the arms-length principle governing his relations with the Arts Council may yet become a clinch. The recommendations of the Parliamentary committee and the Priestley reports have yet to be accepted; but if they are, then it is likely that the Arts Ministry will more closely decide the budgets of the big companies.

The extra money for the Royal Opera House and the RSC recommended by Priestley would have to be found from contingency funds, and the companies would also have to accept Priestley's managerial recommendations. The Arts Council gave its verdict on Priestley when it published its annual report last Wednesday; the Minister hopes to have it sorted out by mid-December. The Arts Council should note that if he accepts the reports, there would have to be "a more explicit level of funding" and that "would mean a level of re-organization".

"Re-organization", when it comes to once more altering the system of local government by abolishing the six Metropolitan Counties and the GLC, is the main source of terror for arts organizations up and down the land. As reported in "Behind the lines" last month, *Streamlining the Cities* has put nearly £30 million pounds worth of arts funding at risk.

Here Lord Gowrie has a hard row to hoe, for the abolition was a manifesto commitment; they are a political policy of which the arts are merely the accidental victims. But he is aware that the crisis the change will provoke for the arts is a superb propaganda weapon for the government's political opponents. (Even leading GLC Tories are joining Tony Banks's artistic campaign to save the GLC.) The firmness as far as arts issues are concerned, both of the Government White Paper and of the Arts Ministry's own consultative document, suggests that this point had not occurred to the authors of the Tory manifesto.

But Lord Gowrie is prepared to come out fighting. Certain regional institutions will be elevated to national status, and placed in the care of the Arts Council. There is no evidence, he claims, that local boroughs will not support the arts if they have to, and the money released to them from the defunct Metropolitan Coun-

cils through the block grants will enable them to do so. Above all, *Streamlining the Cities* is not out "to clobber the arts... this is not a cost-cutting exercise". The Regional Arts Associations might get more money, and he is doing as much as he can to encourage business sponsorship, to the point of thinking out loud about the possibility of the Ministry giving matching grants to commercial sponsors.

Lord Gowrie argues that when all the protective measures have been taken into consideration, the shortfall in funding will only be a sixth of the present provision: "a sixth is a negotiable area". In other words, steps will be taken to ensure that not every threatened institution (and there are many) will go under. Yet according to an Arts Ministry official, in the GLC area alone £3.3 million will have to be found from somewhere if the present position is to be preserved.

Throughout our conversation, Lord Gowrie appeared to accept that the arts require patronage, while arguing that the government's responsibility is to reduce its expenditure and areas of activity. He believes that local communities must support their own arts activities. Were the economy expanding at a greater rate, then greater subsidy would be forthcoming, but monetarism argues that the economy will not expand when public expenditure is too high. Lord Gowrie has no desire to be a cultural dictator, but "we are subject to the dictates of arithmetic".

In the present atmosphere of deepening arithmetical gloom, it seems a forlorn hope to go to the Arts Council and suggest that it should be spending more on literature. But a group of spokesmen for publishers, librarians and authors, gathered together by the Director of the National Book League, Murytn Goff, under the banner of the National Book Committee, have recently been to see Sir William Rees-Mogg to argue precisely that.

The memorandum of protest tries to meet the familiar "stock answers" of the Literature Department that worthwhile schemes will of course be supported, and that, anyway, libraries look after literature. On the first count, it argues that when worthwhile schemes are produced, they are then turned down on the grounds that there are no funds available. On the second, it is pointed out that libraries have no statutory responsibility to encourage "literature" at all; their responsibilities are to books and information.

The National Book Committee seeks to embarrass the Arts Council with odious comparisons. Whereas the Arts Council of Great Britain spends less than one per cent of its total allocation on literature, the Scottish Arts Council spends 4.5 per cent, the Australian Council 6 per cent, and the Welsh Arts Council 7.9 per cent. Having outlined a whole series of

policies that would stimulate both literary consumption and production, the National Book Committee suggests that were the Arts Council to allocate a mere 5 per cent of its gross budget to literature, it would be meeting its responsibilities in this area.

As it happens, next Wednesday the Arts Council will have an opportunity substantially to increase its literary expenditure, when it considers the Literature Advisory Panel's unanimous recommendation that it should back the Publishers' Association's proposal for the creation of a Literary Investment Trust.

As reported in "Behind the lines" in September, the scheme could cost as much as £1 million over three years. The intention is to make possible the publication of up to a hundred works of fiction, biography and criticism a year that would otherwise go unprinted, or prove prohibitively expensive and unprofitable.

Whatever one's suspicions of the motives of the Publishers' Association - and I gather that they are now prepared to invest on their own behalf in the Trust - the idea of cheaper books seems an admirable one. But it seems likely that the germ of a good idea will be crushed in the wheels of the Arts Council's internal politics.

The project for the Literary Investment Trust was devised this summer during an unusually energetic period in the Literature Panel's activities. The panel chairman, Marghanita Laski, was away, and Michael Holroyd, a keen advocate of literary subsidy, was left in charge. Similarly, the Literature Director, Charles Osborne, was on sabbatical, and his deputy, Josephine Falk was *en poste*. On their return, the Director and Chairman's response to the fresh demands an active Literary Investment Trust would make was reported to have been less than enthusiastic. Yet, although the paper proposing the Trust's foundation has been written by Josephine Falk, it will be presented on Wednesday by Charles Osborne and Marghanita Laski. As is so often the case in the literary world, with friends like these, the Literary Investment Trust has no need of external enemies. On the other hand, if the Literature Department finds no fresh justification for its existence, there are genuine fears for its survival.

And finally, the good news. Today the Minister for Arts and Libraries will lay before Parliament an order which sets precisely the sum to be paid out for each library loan of books that have qualified for Public Lending Right during the first period of operation. It is to be 1.02 pence per loan. Thus, by some trick of fate, "Brophy's Penny", the sum originally proposed as right and just by John Brophy in 1951, turns out to be more like 2½d. Such, as Lord Gowrie might say, are the dictates of arithmetic.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

W. G. Beasley's books include *The Meiji Restoration*, 1972.
D. W. Bowett is Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge University.
L. D. Burdard is a database consultant at Oxford University computing service.
Maureen Cain is the author of *Society and the Policeman's Role*, 1973.
Peter Clark's *The English Alehouse: A Social History*, has just been published.
Colin Crouch is a Reader in Sociology at the London School of Economics.
L. de Maning is Professor of Russian Studies at the University of London and author of *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, 1981.
C. R. Dowdell is Professor of the History of Art at the University of Manchester and Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery.
Brian Fothergill's *The Strawberry Hill Set: Horace Walpole and his Circle* has just been published.
F. N. Furbank is the co-editor, with Mary Lago, of *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*.
John Gage's most recent book is *Goethe on Art*, 1980.
John Hayes is the author of *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1982.
Roger Lockyer is a Reader in History at Royal Holloway College, London.
John Hope Mason's most recent book is *The Irresistible Diderot*, 1982.
Andrew Motion's *Secret Narratives* was published earlier this year.
Colin McGinn is the author of *The Character of Mind*, 1982, and *The Subjective View*, 1983.
Roger Mifflin is the author of *Government and Society in Louis XIV's France*, 1977.
Sir David Piper's books include *Artists' London*, 1982.
Claude Rawson is Professor of English at the University of Warwick.
Charles Raw's books include *The Wars of the Roses: A Concise History*, 1977.
A. W. B. Simpson is Professor of Law at the University of Kent.
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Norman Smith is Reader in the History of Technology at Imperial College, London.
J. A. C. Stockwin is the author of *Japan: Divided Politics in a Growth Economy*, 2nd revised edition, 1982.
Julian Symonds's latest book, *The Name of Anne*, was published in September.
Michael Tilly is a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Elements of a children's classic

Claude Rawson

A book is a children's "classic" if grown-ups (parents, teachers, publishers, reviewers) say it is. The canon, like its adult counterpart, is maintained by reciprocal influence and imitation, except that the choice is not made by the consumers themselves. The new Puffin Classics series shares many of its titles with a similar Dent list, though Dent, unlike Puffin, include some newer "classics", like Mary Norton's *Borrower* books. To judge by these seventeen volumes, a Puffin Classic is a book for and about children, published between 1847 (*The Children of the New Forest*) and 1911 (*The Secret Garden*), and most commonly in the thirty years 1870-1900. It is likely to have been a Puffin before it became a Classic, and its author can usually be relied on to have died, considerably, at least fifty years ago. Many of the authors are respected figures in the adult canon - Twain, Stevenson, Hardy, Jack London - and some books (like Hardy's) can only be there for that reason. Twain and Alcott, with seven Puffins between them, dominate this group, two mutually antagonistic figures, embodying opposed and enduring archetypes: adventure versus home, individual versus family, mischief versus respectability, boy versus girl. But the American presence is not confined to these two: more than half the titles and five of the twelve authors are American, while a sixth, Frances Hodgson Burnett, emigrated to America in her youth.

If these really were, and remain, among the most read children's books on both sides of the Atlantic, one may wonder why American authors cornered such a share of the market at this relatively early date: early, that is, in the history of children's books that are still read today. Few books, expressly written for children, which have achieved the long-term durability which is one test of the "classic", date from before the middle of the nineteenth century, just as there are few "adult" books about childhood, or in which children play a prominent part, before the second half of the eighteenth century. Children came late into literature, both as subjects and as consumers, and it is sometimes said that the gradual rise in their status since the eighteenth century parallels, not always at the same pace, that of other underprivileged groups (women, the poor, the conquered races). There's a neatness in the idea that the impulse to write for and about children, and the forging of an idiom for addressing them across the age gap, would develop more quickly in an egalitarian and unhierarchic America than elsewhere.

The matter of idiom is important. Most writers for children, on both sides of the Atlantic, are grown-ups; and a form of generational class-consciousness is built into the situation. The earliest volume in the series, Marryat's *Children of the New Forest*, addresses "my juvenile readers" in its first sentence: a simple

admission of difference, unfussily *de haut en bas*. Children's books, like everything else, have become more complicated since that time. Styles that declare themselves openly, like Marryat's, have sometimes yielded to styles which more or less gracefully reflect or absorb the strain.

Less rather than more, it seems, in the case of some of Marryat's English successors. The hero of Hardy's *Our Exploits at West Poley*, remembering in a moment of crisis "the words ... of Flamininus, the consul, when he was pen-

hood, is called *Jo's Boys*, is an apt if fortuitous token of her reluctance to differentiate between the child and adult perspectives.

There is an assurance about this melting of differences which Twain did not share. Alcott knew she was writing for children, but felt no need to adjust her sights. Twain, on the other hand, wasn't sure whether he was writing for children or to remind adults of their childhood; his vacillations on the matter were discussed in these columns recently (by Zachary Leader, TLS, September 30). *Tom Sawyer* betrays the



Mr and Mrs Fezziwig dancing. One of Michael Foreman's illustrations to a new edition of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens (128pp. Gollancz, £4.95, 0 575 03311 8).

ned up at Thrasymene", is a citizen of the same adult Cloud-cuckoo-land as Macaulay's schoolboy, even allowing for the fact that the narrator is older when he says this than he was when he is supposed to have thought it. When he describes his doings as what "a boy would naturally do", or tells "How Older Heads than Ours Became Concerned", the twirling auto-avuncularly draws painful attention to the generation gap within himself. Hardy is perhaps a special case. Juvenile empathy is not the first quality we associate with his genius, and *West Poley* (which did not appear as a book until 1952) was hardly a runaway success. But the note of bonhomous patronizing was, and perhaps still is, endemic to the genre.

You find it in American authors too, of course. Nat and Tommy, in *Little Men*, "talked boy-fashion about all sorts of things". But the grown Laurie, in *Good Wives*, also speaks "just in his old boyish way". In fact, everybody in Alcott (children, adults, narrator, author) operates at a remarkably homogeneous level. Alcott raises her children to a curious half-life of naturalized adulthood, a process eased by the fact that her adult vision seems in turn to have been approximately on the level of a Sunday school class. The fact that the volume about the boys at Plumfield is called *Little Men*, while its sequel, as the boys grow into man-

hood, is called *Jo's Boys*, is an apt if fortuitous token of her reluctance to differentiate between the child and adult perspectives. There is an assurance about this melting of differences which Twain did not share. Alcott knew she was writing for children, but felt no need to adjust her sights. Twain, on the other hand, wasn't sure whether he was writing for children or to remind adults of their childhood; his vacillations on the matter were discussed in these columns recently (by Zachary Leader, TLS, September 30). *Tom Sawyer* betrays the

uneasiness, with more finesse than Hardy in one direction and than Alcott in the other. But uneasiness it is all the same, as he assumes wisecracking tones to reflect on the pleasures of boyhood, or reports what he thinks of as boy-idioms within coy quotes (Tom "began to 'show off' in all sorts of boyish ways" to impress his sweetheart, who rejoices in the doubly in-avuncular name of Becky Thatcher, an intertextual cross, or double-cross, heavier than any decent heroine ought to have to bear). Twain must have sensed the awkwardness, and found a way out in *Huckleberry Finn*, where Huck and not an avuncular authorial narrator tells the story, and he wisely stuck to this arrangement even in the later sequels, *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and *Tom Sawyer Detective*, where Tom is once again the central figure. Paradoxically, it's *Huckleberry Finn*, told from a boy's angle of vision, that adults read most readily, whether because Twain genuinely found a level where child and adult meet on equal and unforced terms, or whether the problem is side-stepped (or transcended) by the dazzling feat of stylization that is Huck's narrative voice. The first might make his solution egalitarian, the second elitist: I suspect that boys of Huck's age need to be more sophisticated than they usually are to make much of *Huckleberry Finn* and therefore incline to the second view.

Families are what readers of children's books have and must be presumed not to want to read about. There's an aura of "freedom" about orphans which even Alcott's Jo, who thought "families... the most beautiful things in all the world", is responsive to. She seeks both to exploit and to rectify this, to relish the idea of liberation while making sure that it is properly circumscribed: she must have orphans, but she must also be a mother to them.

Jo's most troublesome orphan is Dan, a boarding-school *Huckleberry Finn*, given to running away, like Huck, but also to "coming home" and calling her "mother": Huck's re-

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turns are, at most, points of rest in a roving life, not acceptances of a family ethos, and we hardly imagine him calling Aunt Polly "mother", though she wants to adopt him. Dan is a "colt" to be tamed, as Jo fancies she used to be herself (*Little Men* earns the prize for the most cutely trivial episode of horse-cubing symbolism in English fiction). Dan was the extreme case, the acid test of Jo's interest in the reclamation of "wildness", and Alcott must have felt that she was sailing close to the wind. Dan's refractoriness goes beyond pillow-fights. He is at one stage accused of thieving: his innocence is vindicated with due lumps in the throat, but in Alcott's universe even to be accused of thieving is to be a bad egg, and we are startled (but ought not, on reflection, to be surprised) in *Jo's Boys* to see him killing a man.

Abruptly introduced killings, unprepared for, and often unfollowed-up, are an oddly frequent feature of children's books: *Children of the New Forest*, the Tom Sawyer books, *Kidnapped*, *Moonfleet* offer examples. They're not an expected element of Alcott's world, which makes the eruption and brief despatch of the killing scene in *Jo's Boys* all the more striking. It is rather perfunctorily treated in itself, but its aftermath is decisive: it is as if Alcott had set it up just for the purpose of evading that acceptance of the outcast which she had tenderly luxuriated in but hadn't the nerve to sustain. As with the theft, Dan is not really "guilty": he killed accidentally, in self-defence and while generously protecting a youthful stranger. Dan needs to rule himself out, yet without alienating our sympathies by being really bad. It's as half-hearted and yet as uncompromising as that. It's not that Huck, whom Alcott hated, is being punished in the figure of Dan. Unlike Huck, Dan wants nothing better than to marry the golden-haired Bess and live happily ever after like Jo's other boys. He thus paradoxically proves her point that there's goodness (her sort of goodness, at least) even in the roughest reprobates, not only in the children but in the adults who understand the world and yet he is denied the reward. The romantic outcast with his dark Indian features must finally be kept out of the family fold. He goes out as a missionary to civilize the Indians, a parlour version of joining the Foreign Legion which combines expiation with a surviving aura of tarnished romance. Dan ends in another of the novel's summary killings: "Dan never married, but lived, bravely and usefully, among his chosen people till he was shot defending them; and at last lay quietly asleep in the green wilderness he loved so well,

with a lock of golden hair upon his breast". It is arguable that the most shocking thing is not the brutal brevity of the death, but the sweet lingering over that deprivation.

Dan's death in some ways prefigures that of Conrad's Lord Jim, that other tainted figure who dies in a kind of shabby glory among a people of darker race. Jim, unlike Dan, was a dreamer, driven to a life of the sea by reading romantic books, in this resembling Emil in *Little Men*, who is "bent on going to sea, for the blood of the Vikings stirred in his veins". Like Jim, and also Tom Sawyer, Emil indulges in nautical day-dreaming. "Captain Kyd was his delight": the same is said of Tom in *Tom Sawyer Abroad*. Like most of Jo's boys, excluding Dan, he settles into a worthy and responsible career, following duty rather than glamour. He behaves bravely and correctly in a nautical disaster (as Jim fails to do), becomes a successful merchant seaman rather than a romantic drop-out, and marries an English rose. Dan made the mistake of enacting, rather than dreaming, the romance of adventure, while Emil converts the dream into a respectable livelihood. His passage to maturity would be a homecoming if he had ever really "left" home. He travels further than Dan and as widely as Tom Sawyer but his very wanderings are more docile even than Tom's instant return from abroad when Aunt Polly requires it. Tom never "grows up". There is no place for that in his story. Perhaps not growing up is his subversive potential, realized still more fully in Huck than in Tom himself. Lord Jim, for his part, grows up without maturing, a very different thing for which he pays a bitter price. One difference between children's "classics" and adult fiction is not that in the former make-believe is sustained more thoroughly or for a greater duration, but that it can be experienced scot-free. In Emil's case it even makes a profit.

Orphanhood provides a sealed-off space, free of quotidian obligation and family ties, for the flourishing adventure and make-believe. It is such an ingrained element in children's fiction that it survives perfunctorily even in *The Wizard of Oz*, where it has no active function, since the main story deals with otherworldly travel, hermetically separated from the heroine's home-life. Elsewhere, it is often more conspicuous as an enabling condition than as a state of deprivation. Where deprivation is sensed, it will usually be put right: by the return of the father in *Little Women* and *The Railway Children*, or by Jo's provision of a substitute-family in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*. In most other cases, the idea of deprivation is

more or less neutralized both by the natural drift of the story-interest, and by the almost invariable provision of a parent-surrogate (often an aunt or uncle), anchored in the "real world" and guaranteeing protection and adult control. (Where such a figure is wicked, or rejects rather than protects the hero, as in *Kidnapped* or *Moonfleet*, the effect is one of those reversals of expectation which affirm the traditional pattern in an upside-down way.)

Boys may be allowed their fling. Tom Sawyer can fly anywhere in a balloon so long as he gets back when he's told. But Dorothy, stranded in Oz, wants to go home. That's the story-book difference between girls and boys, and girls who prove headstrong must be radically curbed. Susan Coolidge's *Katy* is tamed by serious illness, while Jo, like Jane Austen's Marianne Dashwood, has to marry a staid middle-aged husband: a negation of romance and an assertion of family values, compounded in matronly sequels which (like that of another famous heroine, Pamela) contain lessons about educating the young. The erstwhile tom-boy now devotes herself to developing homing instincts in adventure-minded orphan boys.

The orphan stereotype, so ubiquitous in children's fiction, is thus no negation of family values. In the end, it invariably upholds or reasserts these values. This is especially true in *The Secret Garden*, the novel in which the

Captain Marryat: *The Children of the New Forest*. 303pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0140350195.
Louisa M. Alcott: *Little Men*. 363pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0140350152.
Jo's Boys. 345pp. Puffin. £1.50. 014035011X.
Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. 221pp. Puffin. 90p. 0140350039.
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. 281pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350071.
The Prince and the Pauper (abridged). 255p. Puffin. £1.25. 0140350179.



The lion and the quail, two of Nicholas Garland's illustrations for "The Bestlery" in *Come Aboard and Sail Away*, a collection of poems by John Fuller (48pp. Edinburgh: The Salamander Press. £6. 0 907540376).



Excalibur and Exocet

Andrew Wawn

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The author's engagement with the medieval world and his belief in the therapeutic power of story find renewed expression in this colourful volume. Its young readers are offered an intriguing sequence of tales, of varying degrees of invention and independence, all of which form part of an account of the indomitable Erik the Viking's quest for "the land where the sun goes down". The Longship Golden Eagle, on the rare occasions when it isn't being mended, is manned by Vikings who at least sound the part. Even the Strong, Ragnar Forkbeard, Gunnar Longhairs, not to mention the "rebel angel" of the party Thangrand, long on *ofermode* and short on fuse, rather like his celebrated namesake in late tenth-century Iceland. There are also unnamed companions whose constant expressions of punctured resolution - "We've had it now!" - provide their pugnacious leader with unwanted additional problems as he attempts to keep the show on the whole road.

Erik and his companions are confronted by a bewildering and deceptive universe of goblins, giants, filibegs, snakes, sagah-trolls,

orphan state is most fully and elaborately portrayed, not for once as a predisposing factor for adventures but as a state in its own right. Indeed the book makes a point of negating "adventure" in the story-book sense. The trappings of Gothic romance, lonely house, "wuthering" winds, cries in the night, conceal no traditional captive but a bossy hypochondriac child imprisoned by neurotic fears. The disagreeable housekeeper and the doctor whom he bookishly suspects of designs on his fortune turn out to be benign, well-meaning guardians (just as the Frankfurt household to which the heroine is sent against her will in *Heidi* turns out against all story-book expectation to be a kind and loving one). Because the garden is a secret and forbidden place, its tending involves elements of stealth, conspiracy and daring, but the real adventures connected with it are a matter of feelings rather than deeds or events. It is Mary's awakened sensibility among the garden's blossoming things which is the subject: how this absorbs the spirit of Colin's dead mother at first into herself, and then into Colin and finally into his father. A shattered family is reconstituted not primarily by circumstantial means (by the mere return of the father, though that takes place, or by the setting up of orphanages), but through a transfiguring and healing event in the inner life of an orphan girl.

Johanna Spyri: *Heidi*. 239pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350020.
Robert Louis Stevenson: *Kidnapped*. 225pp. Puffin. £1.10. 0140350128.
Thomas Hardy: *Our Exploits at West Poole*. 95pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350209.
J. Meade Falkner: *Moonfleet*. 256pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350101.
L. Frank Baum: *The Wizard of Oz*. 177pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350012.
Jack London: *The Call of the Wild*. 124p. Puffin. 85p. 0140350004.
Edith Nesbit: *The Railway Children*. 240p. Puffin. 95p. 0140350039.
Frances Hodgson Burnett: *The Secret Garden*. 253pp. Puffin. 95p. 0140350047.

Choosing a modern classic

The TLS asked twelve writers and critics to select some modern classics from among books published during the past twenty-five years and to say why they thought they would last. We print their answers below.

Gillian Avery

Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* (1977) transcends fashion and has the timeless quality essential for the survival of a children's book. This novel, written for a daughter afraid of death, is both moving and a superb piece of story-telling. It starts on a breathless August day, on the edge of a mysterious wood. The three elements are Winnie Foster who lives in the house by the wood; a sinister stranger in a suit of jaunty yellow who fingers outside the gate, and the Tuck family who, it gradually transpires, having drunk from a spring in the middle of the wood have for 87 years been unable to die or to grow old. Appalled by immortality they snatch Winnie from the spring when she discovers it, but the sinister stranger is determined to exploit it for his own end. The narration is brilliant, the style spare and telling, the message moving and convincing.

Anthea Bell

I would pick *The Satanic Mill* (original title *Knab*), by Otfried Preussler, as a classic of the last twenty-five years. First published in 1971, this powerfully imaginative re-working of legends is specifically set in South Germany around the time of the Thirty Years' War, but its roots go deep and reach wide into the entire European folk consciousness. It is a tale of perilous black magic, barely overcome by love and courage. Every European country draws its traditional tales from themes such as Preussler uses here: pacts with the Devil, shape-changing, magic linked to the cycle of the seasons and the routine rituals of an agricultural life. The background to this story is a water-mill, and the meticulous detail in which its working is described enhances the mystery of the supernatural part of the plot. It is not easy to re-work our ancient traditional themes; but when the thing is well done, it looks as if the story flowed inevitably from its sources. This is the art of the *Kaumärchen*, Otfried Preussler practises that difficult art with consummate skill, making *The Satanic Mill* one of the finest twentieth-century examples of the genre.

Quentin Blake

The current high level of expertise, which is the result of the attention that publishers, writers and artists have devoted to children's books, especially picture books, over the past twenty-five years, makes it even harder to identify that special essence, inwardness or atmosphere which gives a book staying power. During this period I have had at least once a strong sense of encountering something out of ordinary; I hope I may be forgiven - since it is the text I am talking about not the pictures - for selecting a book that I have been personally involved with. When I was first shown the typescript of Russell Hoban's *How Tom Beat Captain Nark and His Hired Sportsmen* (1974), I had the immediate feeling that this was that rare thing, a classic that had not been illustrated. Its humour is fantastic, based on an unusual confidence with imaginative statements ("Tom lived with his maiden aunt Miss Fidget Womkum-Strong. She wore an iron hat and took no powders from anyone. Where she walked the flowers dropped and when she sang the trees shivered"). And with that there is a constant awareness of the sound and shape of words. These things lock together to give the reader the feeling that the text is complete - that it's just as it should be, and couldn't be altered.

You do not need to think of the story as anything more than an entertainment, but it has a sort of moral - one that grows out of the story and not hung on afterwards. There actually was a Victorian invention called *Tom's Foot Motor Boat* (the author sent me a photograph of it) but it took Russell Hoban's imagination to recognize that the men pedalling it were Hired Sportsmen and to extrapolate a poetic fable about education from it.

Alan Brownjohn

Is Ted Hughes's *Season Songs* (1976) a children's book? Its blurb says it is "intended primarily for young readers", but you hear the sceptical question asked; and for some of the poems it seems a fair one. A March calf like "a little syllogism / With a wet blue-reddish muzzle"? Apples emerging from blossom as "the dwarfish truths / Of the prizes"? There are certainly lines and ideas which children will stumble and puzzle over.

The heart of the book is those poems which track the course of the seasons in untypically regular rhythms, using some of the devices of repetition and accumulation which Hughes deployed very differently in *Crow*: pieces like "The River in March", "Hay", "Leaves", "The Seven Sorrows", and "There Came a Day". But *Season Songs* is vibrant throughout with feasts of searching imagination which reveal this most uncompromising of poets to be capable (when he writes, for example, about swifs, or mackerel, or snowflakes, or a cranefly) of seeing with the eye of a child allowed to look, think and perhaps write, for himself. The past twenty-five years have not been rich in children's poets, or in poetry written especially for children by "adult" poets. *Season Songs* ought to establish itself as a classic for children as well as a substantial addition to the body of Ted Hughes's work.

Faith Jaques

A children's classic has to be a book which children actually enjoy. Children read emotionally, not analytically, and the book must provide a world they can step into. Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973) has this quality exactly - you feel the events of Carrie's stay in wartime Wales happening as you read about them. The book has a strong sense of time and place, and very convincing characters, through whom one understands the engrossing complexities of the plot. It is an understated book, seldom explicit, and yet it grips the reader with peculiar intensity. Underlying the story is a sense of loss, of things that have happened that never can be changed; I find it a very moving book and always feel a satisfying sadness when I finish it.

Two other books which I regard as classics are Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1967), for its glorious pictures, but also for its 354 perfectly chosen words; and Raymond Briggs's beautiful *The Snowman* (1978). Both have a poetic quality which lifts them into classic status: they will last forever.

Margaret Meek

To call a children's book a "classic" is to adopt the non-logic of the Queen of Hearts: "Sentence first - verdict afterwards." Remember, *Swallows and Amazons* began with a very modest review in the TLS.

Children's books survive on nostalgia and singularity. In readers, recollections of childhood, stressful or calm. Impoverished or indulged are textured over time from book incidents as well as real ones; Peter Rabbit in Mr McGregor's garden is a feeling. In the same way, phrases that have passed into tribal utterance: "curiouser and curiouser", "jam tomorrow and jam yesterday - but never jam today" bring back what we think we remember reading with pleasure. The purest classics are popular fiction and comics, remembered as genres and forgotten as texts by adults with access to printing presses.

For me the classic children's book is one where the private sensibility of the author, a kind of primitive autism, is widely shared by children as a group. The way a classic tale is told calls out a strong sense of recognition in a tribe, in this case the young. I've seen it at work in Philip Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), Rosemary Sutcliffe's *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954) and Alan Garner's *The Stone Book* (1976). The authors absorb the readers into the narration. So it is in *The Wizard of Earth-Sea* (1971). Ursula Le Guin's mythopoeic imagination creates a convincing world out of the material of folk tales. And the Wizard

hunting the evil shadow that his ill-used skill has loosed on the world represents all the ordeals of ordinary childhood as well as the cosmic threat experienced by contemporary children.

Philippa Pearce

My choice is Raymond Briggs's picture-book *Father Christmas* (1973): at long last, a really first rate work on a classic hero. Children have been waiting for such a book for over a century. We've all known the present-receiving end of the story: what we still needed was an authentic portrait of F. Christmas himself, with an account of his working day (December 24) and a peek into his home and its routines. All that is covered in an admirable narrative flow of bright, witty pictures, with words limited to a few bubbled remarks. This *Father Christmas* will never date, because he is old-fashioned - Golden-Aged - from the beginning. He lives in a child's dream of a homely little house with a cat and a dog and a backyard with hens to lay breakfast-eggs and a stable for the reindeer. (Only an outside lav; but, if you're young, that's interesting.) His life may seem idyllic, but there is no minimizing the discomforts of wintry weather and inconvenient chimneys.

Children's picture books have too often suffered from good artists who do not know how to tell a story or how to create real and endearing characters. Raymond Briggs does know.

Claude Rawson

In Penelope Lively's *Gobling Back* (1975), Jane remembers causing some fish to die: "the emotion came rushing back, like a bad taste. It is called guilt: at six, knowing it for the first time, I felt as though clutched by some disease". The gap between the adult's and the child's words for things is neither ignored nor fustily highlighted: you won't read about "girlish talk" or "boyish ways" here. Jane, now married, revisits her childhood home after her father's death, and remembers her and her brother Edward's wartime childhood. Their father was mostly away in the war; their mother dead. We know Edward will die later, in Korea. It's told by the adult Jane, entering vividly and freshly into her childhood feelings but with an active awareness of subsequent layers of time. The result is an unforced solution to the dilemma of all adult writers of children's books: how to achieve a child's perspective without resorting to a falsifying child-speak or a self-conscious avuncularity. Memory plays honest broker in an elaborate traffic-between past and present, handled with great delicacy. This is a classic English orphan idyll of genteel rural growing up, made poignant by a muted awareness of war and by a sense of later sadness. It is a book for children and adults: those in-between creatures called children-of-all-ages won't make much of it.

John Rowe Townsend

There are no instant classics. Lasting appeal is required as well as literary merit; times gives the final verdict, and we are unwise if we guess too confidently what time will decide. But when Russell Hoban's *The Mouse and his Child* was first published in this country it seemed to me to have classic quality, and in the fourteen years since then I haven't changed my mind.

The book works, as a classic should, at several levels. You can read it as a straight adventure story about the pilgrimage of a pair of linked clockwork toys, through a world in which real and toy animals mix, in a quest to find a home and become self-winding. As adventure, the book has continual action, excitement, suspense, and surprise; and there is a splendid villain to be defeated in the person of Manny Rat, ruler of the garbage dump. It is also a work of dry satiric wit, with philosophical subtleties underlying the colour and comedy of the surface.

And it is an allegory of human life. The mouse and his child are people, totally dependent on each other. Through all their setbacks, love and hope and courage keep them going; and, to give powerful point to the story, when

towards the end the father seems defeated it is the child who perseveres and finds a way.

Geoffrey Trease

In *The Kingdom of Carbone* (1959) Barbara Sleigh achieved that rare feat, a thoroughly satisfactory sequel. Carroll did it, Louisa Alcott and Thomas Hughes did not. In her magical cat, Carbone, who had made his first appearance in 1955, Miss Sleigh had added a splendidly individual contribution to the long line of fictional felines. A lovable character is the first requisite for successful sequels and if that character has infinite scope for development - Carbone started as an abducted kitten rescued by the children, Rosemary and John, but reappears in his full dignity as King of the Cats - the story cannot be dismissed as "the mixture as before". Besides Carbone himself there is another unforgettable creation, the idiosyncratic Mrs Cantrip, the witch who originally stole him and whose grudging help has to be invoked in this second adventure. And the two children, though they can hardly compete with such fantastic personalities, are by no means negligible. What else helps to make a classic? Warmth of feeling and humour, whether expressed in Mrs Cantrip's acid dialogue or those happy verbal inventions, those fanciful paradoxical phrases which children love - and remember? On these qualities, too, the book scores highly.

Marina Warner

Quentin Blake's dashing pen and wash illustrations, his doodling, spontaneous line, has exhilarated readers - children and other - in stories by Russell Hoban and Roald Dahl as well as his own. But the perfect expression of Blake's brilliance is his comical and endearing creation, *Mister Magnolia* (1980). In some twenty lines of verse with the chorus, "Mister Magnolia has only one boot", Blake tells a story, conjures his hero's madcap oddity, and turns in some of the neatest rhymes since Ogden Nash. On every spread, his fluid pen looks at it as if it has travelled without even a backward thought, a carelessness that exactly matches the inspiring innocence of Mister Magnolia himself. It is a classic in the English tradition of doily invention, but without Lear's melancholy, Carroll's obscurity, Milne's occasional wimpishness or Bello's cruelty. It should never go out of print.

Kaye Webb

To have been the publisher of at least a hundred likely starters finds me in a particularly vulnerable position, each one of them having been a cause for celebration in their time. Apart from its status as a work of outstanding excellence, one of the chief ways in which I find myself recognizing a book as likely to become a classic is if it in some sense breaks new ground, either by tackling problems or people or environments that have been avoided or skirted round previously, as with Alan Garner's *Owl Service* (1967), John Rowe Townsend's *Gumby's Yard* (1967) and Elizabeth Stuckey's *Magnolia Street* (now alas out of print); or takes an entirely new attitude towards its subject, as does Joan Aiken in her historical novels from *Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962) onwards, when she elects to present English history as a tremendous romp.

I am chagrined to find that some titles I instantly noted as worthy to be included, such as Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) and Ardizzone's *Little Tim* are outside the boundary by a couple of years. Fortunately Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), Leon Garfield's *Jack Holborn* (1967), Nina Bawden's *Peppermint Pig* (1975), Clive King's *Sly of The Dump* (1963), and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1967) just come in under start-up orders, while Peter Dickinson's *Blue Hawk* (1976) is a surprisingly late entry. If, however, I am truly confined to one vote, I think it must be for Norton Justin's *Phantom Toadpool*. Not only because it is unique of its kind, but because over these past twenty-one years I have been so very impressed by the devotion it inspires in any child who is lucky enough to discover it.

Party-fare

George Szirtes

MICHAEL ROSEN
Quick Let's Get Out of Here
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
128pp. Deutsch. £5.95.
0233975594

Michael Rosen understands perfectly one area of childhood experience, though he is less a poet than a traditional Jewish story-teller of the homely and populist kind. His stories are performances before a congregation of children. He himself is the party-fare. He reads his story.

However an unadorned distillate of Rosen would be like trying to survive on endless helpings of such stuff as crumpets, sausages on sticks, jelly, ice-creams, fairy cakes and Pepsi. Of course children love it, and it would be a foolish parent who tried to exclude these elements of a child's diet by insisting on the virtues of

wholefood. High-mindedness does not go down well with children, though adults heartily endorse it. The poems in *Quick Let's Get Out of Here* are illustrated by the ubiquitous Quentin Blake, who gives lively and tangible form to the extrovert happy-go-lucky catered for by Rosen. There are no party-poopers to cast a blight on the proceedings; to get locked in cupboards, to cling unhealthily to their more confident peers, to be excluded from games. Everybody is terribly gregarious. The two or three moments of introversion are no more than one must humanly allow for, but the kids get over it.

Let us be quite unfair for a minute. This book has all the thin warmth of one of those post-war, open-plan primary schools. No corridors and few corners. Ideal for an absolutely extroverted party with lashings and lashings. The children will have fun. And of course they do. Why should anyone be so old-fashioned as to ask for anything else?

The Winner of the Young Observer/Book Organisation Fiction Prize 1983 is

Peter Carter
for
Children of the Book
0 19 271456 2

An admirable book and splendid entertainment

The School Librarian

"Peter Carter is an author who can turn history into gold without any glossing of the grimness." The Observer

Oxford Books for Children

Happily ever after

Margaret Meek

ROBIN MCKINLEY
Beauty
Julia MacRae. £6.95.
0 86203 143 5

As anyone who has read Bettelheim knows, *Beauty and the Beast* "foreshadows Freud by centuries" with its theme of the development of happy sexual love. This version, a first-person narration with modern overtones derived from the classic text of Madame de Beaumont, certainly "reads" its post-Freudian and adolescent readers.

This Beauty, whose given name is Honour, is the plain clever one of the rich merchant's three daughters. She doesn't hate her sisters nor envy their marriage-worthiness: she rides well and translates Socrates instead. She also avoids society and mirrors. The resolution of this inner conflict is only a matter of time. So when her father's ruin removes them to a cottage at the edge of the enchanted forest, this united family take to honest poverty – the scrubbing and tree-felling made familiar in many a children's story of American homesteaders – and survive hard winters and social degradation. Beauty has a fine horse, a legacy of palmier days and the transitional object of affection, who carries her off into the forest when the time comes for her to save her father from the Beast. We are never in any doubt that all will be well as Beauty and the Beast work out their problem of ugliness: Beauty to accept what she first wants to reject, and Beast to understand that kindness may not compensate for revulsion. The magic works, as it has always done since Apuleius' telling of the story of Cupid and Psyche.

The modern overtones are interesting. The reader takes on the "I" of the narrator as the story moves at the pace of a three-act ballet. The Beast is never menacing; his brooding presence is a support. But classic fairy tales ignore motives in the way that modern ones cannot, so Beauty's narcissistic phase, when she is given all she desires, especially a room of her own and a library, as well as fine food and clothes that just appear, is governed by two invisible sub-characters whose voices she gradually hears. They are fairy-godmothers who discuss her "problem" like tolerant school teachers.

The plot also has a modern inter-textuality based on what Beauty reads, including books that "haven't been written yet". Sherlock Holmes proves difficult. When her emotional response to Beast begins to change she is reading Catullus. (Beast has strong views about *The Faerie Queene*). Here are hints about intellectual women not being necessarily plain. But, more significantly, the story holds within itself its predecessors in the written fairy tale, and shows how each generation of readers is written into the version they read.

Heroines have ever fallen in love and been said to live happily ever after. *Beauty and the Beast* is the allegory of the process and, as such, it stands between childhood and adult literature. Yet its particular relevance to adolescence has not been brought out in quite this way before. The author writes as though she were looking at herself in a mirror, moving through the archetypal story to explore her own narration of it. Once or twice the telling nearly falls into sentimentality, but the hair-breadth escape – the writer's sense of humour, perhaps, or that remarkable horse – keeps embarrassment away. It is still the story the Opies call "the most symbolic of the fairy tales after *Cinderella* and the most intellectually satisfying".

The parish bounds

Joanna Motion

JILL PATON WALSH
A Parcel of Patterns
Kestrel. £5.50.
07226 5898 2

The parcel contains patterns which demonstrate the newly relaxed and frivolous dress of Restoration London. What it brings with them to the Puritan village of Eyam in Derbyshire is plague. Plague breathes in on the thought of a lace cuff and a slashed sleeve. Jill Paton Walsh's new novel tells the extraordinary history of Eyam where in one haunted year between 1665 and 1666 three-quarters of the inhabitants died of plague: a history made more bizarre and poignant by the villagers' decision to impose an internal exile on themselves. Keeping within their parish bounds stopped the plague from spreading elsewhere, but ensured that the rat-and flea-borne bacillus ricocheted around in a confined area till no family was untouched.

Not, of course, that the villagers in the book know that they have a bacillus to deal with. Eyam has two parsons, of the old and new persuasion, each with different explanations for the outbreak and different responses to it. Is "the sickness" caused by poisoned air or by sin? Should it be met with the building of isolation huts or with repentance? The parsons are opposed in everything except their duty to the dying and their belief in the necessity (and even the holiness?) of the village quarantine. Faced with a disease whose passage is so capricious

and effects so appalling, the villagers divide in their allegiance. They seek refuge in religion, superstition, blasphemy, herbal tea, or some desperate mixture of all of them.

The narrator of these tensions is a young woman, Mall Percival, for whom the telling acts as a ridding charm. By conjuring up the vanished life of the village, its drama, quarrels and pleasures – including her own love story – she hopes to free herself of the grief and numbness and to leave the roll call of the dead for a new life in Puritan New England. For this purpose, Paton Walsh has constructed a version of seventeenth-century prose which, though it sometimes jars or falls into self-conscious poeticisms, is for the most part both convincing and readable.

And they that did much to keep from catching it, and they that did naught, fell sick alike, so that there was no discerning any cause or reason in what befell, except it was the will of God, his providence and judgement upon us.

The book's narrative moves in one inexorable direction, towards death for most of the characters, but within this narrowing focus, Jill Paton Walsh contains a series of striking scenes both from the happier ordinary past and the peculiar climate of the plague year: Mall as a young girl drawn into helping at the difficult birth of a lamb; the ducks which refuse to stay evacuated and waddle back dejectedly from a neighbouring village; the woman who digs graves for her husband and six of her children within a week, before breaking out of the prison that the diseased village has become. It is a powerful story, compellingly told.

Across the Pyrenees

Patricia Craig

JOAN AIKEN
Bride the Wind
Cape. £6.95.
0224 021 370

Joan Aiken's novel, as usual, gets off to a distinctive start. "How wretched and grim is the sight of a sea-shore when a ship has been wrecked upon it!" her narrator exclaims in the opening line, transporting us instantly to a realm of theatricality and high adventure. The plot of this book, in outline, could hardly be less original; and it could hardly be presented with greater zest or inventiveness. It is a heady combination.

Felix Brooke, aged thirteen or thereabouts, is a passenger on a ship that comes to grief in the Bay of Biscay, causing his dismayed observation on the state of the beach. Felix is a boy to whom things happen: hard on the heels of the shipwreck comes a mystical experience in a grove near the shore. The effect of this, combined with a knock on the head, is to put him into a kind of catatonic trance. Some months later, he comes to his senses in the act of wedding an artichoke bed in a monastery garden.

It is no ordinary monastery. St Just de Seignanx is governed by an odd Abbot who inflicts frequent beatings on unlucky novices. Father Vespasian possesses a pair of eyes that flame like candles, as well as being subject to alarming seizures and fits of fury. Felix, who falls foul of this infernal monk, is soon laying plans

to get away – along with a half-hanged boy whose life he saved after regaining his wits. Supernatural promptings had led him to the figure of Juan suspended from a tree.

In his injudicious pursuit of the fleeing pair, Father Vespasian is swept into the sea and drowned. Or is he? In the course of their journey across the Pyrenees, the boys catch sight of a creature that is either the unspeakable Abbot, or something worse. Whatever it is, it has joined forces, in a most alarming way, with the Mala Gente, a band of brigands with drastic designs on Juan. The intrepid runaways, one shoeless and suffering the effects of having been strung up by the neck, and the other bearing the scars of a recent scourging, have a lot to contend with.

They take it all in their stride, of course, quickly acquiring shoes and ponies, evading those on their track, landing in the middle of a Basque festival, quarrelling sufficiently to ensure a fair degree of narrative friction, and eventually discarding their doubts about one another: by the end of the adventure they are fast friends. An extraordinary rumbustiousness of action is superimposed over the sedate style that denotes the period (1820): "The thunderstorms of the Pyrenees are notorious for their severity", Felix observes in a schoolmasterish voice which contributes charm to the underlining. Instead of the dullness usually associated with a pedantic tone. All the traditional storybook contents – the escape, the dangerous journey, the evildoers, the colourful encounters – are invested with a new decorativeness and vigour. And Joan Aiken has lost nothing of her ability to surprise.

In brief

QUENTIN BLAKE
Quentin Blake's Nursery Rhyme Book
Cape £4.95.
0224 021 443

Quentin Blake's *Nursery Rhyme Book* contains, as you might expect, a selection of more or less unfamiliar (but still chantable) nursery rhymes and a number of lively drawings where a few confident lines and some splashes of colour evoke the highly characteristic features of Mr Punchinello, Jack Sprat and any number of attendant children, cats, dogs and bosomy ladies. Quentin Blake's illustrations are unusual for a book of this kind in that they manage not to dominate the page while remaining

rewarding in themselves. Here Blake seems to be working on a Chagall-like theme of flight: Jack-a-Dandy hops higher than the house. Jumping Joan bounds into the air far above the heads of her family and friends; the Mail in Brown is depicted achieving a graceful trajectory in pursuit of the Pig. A small doubt remains over whether the rhymes and pictures may not have gone a little too far in their pursuit of originality. A greater doubt concerns the wisdom of publishing a moderately expensive book containing sixteen not terribly memorable rhymes for a market which has already been supplied with the works of Provensen, Bayley and Briggs.

Elizabeth Barry

The loom of youth

Geoffrey Trease

Do we need the "teenage novel"? Some say no, adolescents who have outgrown children's fiction should rush gladly forward into the treasure-cave of adult literature. But will they? That transition was easier when more novels were concerned with young characters stepping out into life. So many now open with a middle-aged woman picking up the pieces of the previous twenty years. Not much there for the adolescent who can't see beyond the next five. The special teenage novel could be a welcome innovation, but do the books so far published deserve the welcome? In recent weeks I have read thirteen. The eight considered here offer a fair sample, notably in the disproportionate preference for male central characters (little advance on Henty, here) and for the nihilism of the inner-city delinquent.

From Nigel Hinton's first sentence, "Buddy stole the money from his mother's purse just before he left for school", we suspect that our hero has problems. This proves to be an understatement. A mother who walks out, an unemployed father suddenly affluent from unexplained night-work, shop-lifting, embarrassments at school – the author, an ex-teacher, piles it on, and no wonder the worried lad's cheeks are constantly wet with tears. This is scarcely, as the publishers imply, a book "for young adults" – Buddy is only thirteen – but more of an older children's story, with a good suspenseful plot, if a shade too obviously programmed.

In New York, of course, kids are tougher. *Bad Apple* opens with fifteen-year-old Nicky, gun in hand, contemplating his parents asleep in bed. "I should shoot him, and then do Mom before she can scream." Well, parents always have been a problem in juvenile fiction, though in the old, soft days we either killed them off before page one or posted them abroad to release their offspring for independent adventure. Not so, now. In almost all these books parents present a problem that will not go away. They drink, nag, bully, quarrel, or if (worst of all) middle-class they have too many gnomes in the garden. A constant embarrassment. Nicky does not, in fact, shoot his – that would interfere with the evening's criminal programme. In language that it would be unforgivably old-fashioned to wince at, this rattling yarn runs on from sexual intercourse and mutual masturbation to flick-knives and drugs. "If the world as it is is normal, who wants to be clear-headed?" asks Nicky. "Reality isn't nearly as much fun as being loaded."

A similar spirit pervades *Johnny Jarvis*. The school-leaver feels only "rage at the country, the government", though his grounds for indignation are obscure, since he has not even tried for a job and his horizon is so limited that he never goes "beyond three streets away". I found this book particularly repellent in its mindless self-pity. "If I took – and still do take – revenge on the world and my closest friends," says the narrator, "it's because I can't forgive anyone for having the things I never had." That

such youths undeniably exist is a cause for concern. That they should so fascinate our authors, as if no other adolescents mattered, is mystifying. And by which section of the teenage public do the authors expect to be read?

In a sympathetic but drably depressing first novel by Rhodri Jones, headmaster of a multi-racial comprehensive, we get the same monotonous pattern from the loom of youth – lying and shop-lifting, the interception and destruction of parents' mail from school, and of course (since Delroy is black) police harassment, not very surprising since the boy has just stolen a bottle of milk from the roundsman's float. Insecurity, inferiority, bewildered resentment – they have been the legitimate stuff of literature since before *Jane Eyre*, but they become unconvincing if unrelieved.

There is humour, at least, in *No Place Like Pete* is, to put it kindly, unacademic. He has acquired one CSE grade 4 in Metalwork and failed the other seven. A drifter, he is the despair of his father and teachers, while his mother, depicted with refreshing satire, is a do-gooder obsessed with "problems" but too sentimentally blinkered to grasp them. There are moments when she makes one sympathize

with Pete though mostly one wants to shake him until his teeth rattle.

What a contrast is *Dear Comrade*, a love story developed in letters between a boy and a girl who meet only in the holidays. Kate is an idealist, a peace campaigner, so they wrangle good-humouredly over politics, but they have much more in common – impatience with school, conflicts with parents they love but fiercely criticize, uncertainties over careers, and other authentic anguishes of their age-group. At once superficially sophisticated and touchingly vulnerable, they make an attractive duo, witty, intelligent and enthusiastically alive.

There is vitality too in *The Damned*. Like Kate, Chris is worried about the Bomb. He joins the extremist DAMN, "Direct Action against the Missiles Now", though he has an even greater fear – that, although soon he will have to start shaving, he has not yet experienced sexual intercourse. The book opens, "I wish I could screw her" (he is playing chess against a girl at school), and this urge recurs irrepressibly. Linda Hoy feels strongly about both the peace movement and male aggression, but does not allow these preoccupations to spoil an

often hilarious narrative.

It is not the Bomb that is implied in Jacqueline Wilson's title but that other adolescents' nightmare, the doormat slap of the O-level results. There is a new twist here – Katherine is clever, she can't have failed, but will her grades reach the standard her father expects? Suspense is maintained while the interminable holiday weeks unroll. There are plenty of subplots – sisterly tensions, the embarrassing behaviour of parents, and the excitement of the first boy-friend. Unlike many of the others, it is a good read.

Nigel Hinton: *Buddy*. Dent. £5.95. 0 460 06089 9.

Larry Bogard: *Bad Apple*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30553 1.

Nigel Williams: *Johnny Jarvis*. Puffin. £1.50. 0 1403 1650 7.

Rhodri Jones: *Delroy is Here*. Dent. £5.95. 0 460 06138 0.

Gene Kemp: *No Place Like*. Faber. £4.95. 0 371 13063 1.

Frances Thomas: *Dear Comrade*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30559 0.

Linda Hoy: *The Damned*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30520 5.

The liberal case

J. K. L. Walker

JOHN BRANFIELD
Thin Ice
152pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 03350 9

Civilized attitudes towards male homosexuality have been a slow growth in Britain; the liberal public orthodoxies have yet to be matched by private attitudes, which, according to age and education, may range from barely suppressed outrage to embarrassed resignation. In his new novel, *Thin Ice*, John Branfield provides young readers with an impeccable résumé of the liberal case; they may put it in their parents' Christmas stocking with every confidence.

Andy Trewin is seventeen and head boy of Bywaters, a Yorkshire boarding-school with a substantial intake of day-boys, situated some half-hour by train from the town of Barnsby where Andy lives with his mother and father, a minor civil servant of rebellious temperament exiled by the demands of his job from his native Cornwall. As the novel opens, snow is falling, heralding the start of the notorious winter of early 1947, a period when severe weather and post-war shortages seemed to many a disinterested verdict on Mr Atlee's government. It is against this wintry background and its cumulative daily discomforts and excitements that the story unfolds. Andy's school career is at a critical stage: as a liberally-minded head boy he finds his authority challenged by a group of prefects, headed by the obnoxious Pugsley, who are set on restoring beating; as the recent winner of a Cambridge scholarship

he must work hard for the county major scholarship that will finance him at the university. Andy attributes much of his success academically to his friendship with Duncan Smith, a young journalist on the local paper who also runs extra-mural evening classes in drama in Barnsby. After one such session, in which Andy has taken the name part in *Hamlet*, Duncan, over drinks in a local pub, discusses Freudian interpretations of the play and, later, reveals that he is a homosexual. This is no news to Andy, who has already been cast off by his girl-friend Gloria because of his association with Duncan, but he makes it clear that he himself has no homosexual inclinations.

A week-end trip over icy roads to Leeds in Duncan's car to visit his friends Michael, a middle-aged university lecturer, and Tony, a young shop-assistant, affords Branfield opportunities to discuss homosexuality and show it in action, domestically and socially. After drinking too much at a basement club, Andy is put to bed in Michael's flat by Duncan who rejects his half-hearted advances, explaining the next morning that if seduction had been in his mind he could have done it long since. The week-end however, has a disastrous sequel when Tony is picked up by the police and gives them a full account. Duncan is arrested and Andy put through a merciless cross-examination by plain-clothes detectives both at home and at Leeds police station in an abortive attempt to get him to incriminate Duncan. Later, to Andy's horror, Duncan is sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for a casual encounter with Tony. As the snows at last melt and floods engulf Barnsby, Andy reflects on the injustice of it all and, with apparent inconsequentiality, how Duncan's prison sentence

has prevented his reporting the floods for his paper. As a tailpiece to the novel, Branfield appends a note on the Wolfenden-inspired legislation of 1967.

Thin Ice is an open appeal to the social conscience of its readers but, for all that, Branfield puts the case (if, indeed, one should view it as a case) fairly, not attempting, for example, to gloss over the inconstancy of many homosexuals or the unlikelihood of a heterosexual marriage succeeding. Inevitably perhaps, much of the novel is conducted at the level of a debate, which makes for a certain thinness of characterization, notably of Duncan, who seems too good to be true at times, although the elder Trewins seem curiously quiescent for parents of this generation. That Branfield should have chosen to set his story in the pre-Wolfenden era, when legal punishments lay permanently in store for homosexuals, adds a necessary element of drama while enabling him to make the more general point that, as Andy comes to realize, it is the Pugsleys of this world, the men dressed in a little brief authority, who lie behind the laws that have condemned Duncan and who must be fought. The 1947 winter in the North of England, too, provides a heightened background to the events of the novel, while serving as an extended metaphor for the apparent permafrost in the world of homosexuals shivered for Duncan, in prison, the thaw comes too late. Mr Branfield presents all this in a clipped, matter-of-fact style appropriate to his sensible conclusions and still touchy subject. This is a book that will appeal to all liberal-minded parents, and particularly those who like nothing better after the Christmas pudding and mince pies than a good rousing family discussion about homosexuality.

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Gollancz

Picture books 1

Paula Neuss

Water isn't everywhere, but the best books contain a good deal of it. In *There's a Hippo in my Bath* a small boy is joined in the water by a collection of creatures ranging from penguins to a whale, and washes the back and behind the ears of the starring hippopotamus (who should not have been abbreviated: small children like saying the whole word). This is a Japanese book and the low square bath causes some puzzlement at first, though the custom of sharing a bath with a number of other creatures seems quite usual to a child.

More hippopotamuses, this time on their hind legs and with pretty hats, are active in *Sophie and Jack help out*, apart, that is, from Pa; a, who is ill in bed (under a patchwork quilt with a book). Spring has arrived and the vegetables for Papa's market garden must be planted, but Sophie and Jack's seedlings are uprooted one terrible stormy night. The hippo children "tidy up" but the plants grow in most admired disorder, with pumpkins where corn should grow and corn in place of beetroots. Susan Gantner's pictures are simple and colourful with lots of details for inventive development of the plot.

More water in *Tattle's River Journey*, a sort of updated version of the Noah story, except that Tattle - who is supposed to be "as beautiful as the star-fung night", though she doesn't look it - only takes passengers on board after the river flood has begun and there is none of Noah's orderliness about her. She rescues a baby and a young man whom she finally marries: "He was the homeliest young man Tattle had ever seen but his eyes were bright and kind . . . He thanked the cow and chicken for his supper". The pictures are good, especially those of objects bobbing in the flood, but the tale is mawkish. Not as mawkish, though, as *The Mouldy*, a Tolkien-influenced tale of a boy's search for a lost sheep in a world which causes havoc in "the great garden of the world". It is conquered by the king's daughter Talitha, "the eldest child of the Daftdill school". The section where she sits with a passing slug "loping knitting wool round her horns" is typically soppy, and brings out the worst in Nicola Bayley's artwork, which needs the discipline of a strong story line like that of a nursery rhyme to keep it under control.

Another rather sick-making book is *Chuckle*, a new baby-in-the-house story, that goes on much too long. Lucy was a good girl who "helped her mum around the house" till baby Chuckle arrived. She stops making her bed and

won't eat her carrots, and does everything she can to annoy her baby brother, but he only gurgles with delight. Conversion comes when Chuckle's first word is "Lucy" rather than "Mum" or "Dad", and then Lucy eats not only her own carrots but Chuckle's as well.

Children's books with an obvious message never seem very successful, and even when little bits of moralizing (washing behind one's ears as well as the hippo's) are slipped in they tend to spoil the story, though Sophie and Jack's tidying up after the storm seems so necessary that it hardly looks like indoctrination. In *Tea-Time* the message is that familiar one of "eat up your tea or else something awful will happen" and at first it does - the children get smaller and smaller and like Alice go down a hole, this time that of a mouse. But there such nice things happen that the moral gets confusing - John and Rachel join a mouse's party and the book turns into a counting book as they eat from one jelly up to ten sugar pigs. They grow again and only just get out of the hole before returning to eat all their tea as well. The conclusion seems to be that it might be fun not to eat your tea to start with - hardly a pleasing message for parents.

Some similar confusion occurs in *The Adventures of Arthur and Edmund*, another water-based book. Two baby seals decide to go swimming when their parents are asleep, though they know they shouldn't. Some potentially nasty things occur - they meet a toothy shark and Edmund gets stuck in a rock, but he's pulled out by a little girl called Lucy. She invites them to her house and then returns them safely by boat to their parents, who have been worried out of their minds. This book is obviously written because its author likes drawing seals and it would have been better if the story had been as plain as the pictures. Still there are some nice moments, as when Edmund asks if a peanut butter sandwich is a fish.

Altko Hayashi: There's a Hippo in my Bath. Dent. £4.49. 0 460 06139 9.

Judy Taylor: Sophie and Jack help out. Illustrated by Susan Gantner. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 305761 2.

Shirley Rousseau Murphy: Tattle's River Journey. Illustrated by Tomie de Paola. Methuen. £5.50. 0 416 43460 7.

William Maynet The Mouldy. Illustrated by Nicola Bayley. Cape. £4.95. 0 224 02092 7.

Nicki Wilson: Chuckle. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 450 77. *Chris and Sonja Knapp: Tea-Time*. Illustrated by Valerie Littlewood. Julia MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 86203 142 7.

Bonni Durair: The Adventures of Arthur and Edmund. Deutsch. £4.95. 0 233 97535 7.

Match and miss

John Mole

MONIKA BEISNER
Monika Beisner's Book of Riddles
Cape. £4.95.
0 224 02091 9

There seems to be a vogue for riddles at the moment, and this handsomely produced book is an elegant contribution to the fashion. It consists of 101 rhymes and conundrums, and a dozen full-page colour plates showing all the solutions - as well as numerous decoys - which lead up to a set of pictures, immaculately lit landscapes. The effect is attractively surreal, and indeed one of the designs displays a table in the foreground with a pipe, a guttering candle, an hour-glass, three cowering magpies and much else carefully set against sand dunes and a cloudscape, which recall both Dali's "The Persistence of Memory" and Magritte's "Golden Legend". Monika Beisner is clearly a witty, alive, highly sophisticated illustrator. Another of the plates plays host and tribute to pretty well the entire pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: a girl who is unmistakably related to Morris's Jane Burden as seen by Rossetti, sheep by courtesy of Holman Hunt and so on. While children are guessing at identities, some of their parents will be able to play Spot the Artist.

Opposite each picture is a group of riddles, some traditional and some presumably by

Monika Beisner herself, which correspond to a selection of its items. So, for example, a key ("What force and strength cannot get through / I, with a gentle touch can do . . .") is discovered tucked under the wing of a dove whose "first is in window but not in pane" and who had better watch out for that cat whose "first is in chocolate but not in ham" as it climbs a beautifully designed tree which isn't the answer to anything. Things can be pieced happily towards completion, back and forth between text and pictures, and there is much to enjoy in the solving. What gets left out, though, is also pleasantly teasing. In one picture, dominated by a trio of magnificent peacocks ("More eyes have I than I do need for sight"), a pert, conspicuous robin perches on an open book and a stork stands over its nest built on a distant chimney, but neither of them claims its riddle. The shadow cast by one of the peacocks, however, does. This game of match and miss should keep the reader alert, although, of course, answers are supplied at the back of the book.

When the words are said and done, this is really a picture book. Monika Beisner's images are haunting in a precise, chilly and slightly morbid manner. There's something rather in-ent about their fastidious detail and impeccable, poised finish. Cold, impersonal they are, but a little too brilliant to satisfy the imagination. Nevertheless everything is in the while it lasts, and the whole decorative enterprise is worthy of the highest order.



Avoiding a procession through the streets of Manhattan of characters from children's literature (now justifiably including a huge model of himself), Anno trots off past the lions of the New York Public Library into Central Park where, instead of jogging and mugging, the acquisition of Manhattan from the Indians is taking place: one of the many cheery anachronistic montages in Anno's USA by Mitsumasa Anno (Bodley Head. £5.50. 0 370 30570 1) - a delightful sequel to Anno's travels in Italy and Britain.

Picture books 2

Barbara Sherrard-Smith

Cheerfulness is the keynote of the seasonal picture book. The cover of *We wish you a Merry Christmas* shows a group of rosy-cheeked children singing in the snow. On the end papers, even the cows look pleased as they are glimpsed across an expanse of snow. Inside, the group of engagingly dumpy children tramps across each snowy page, chanting the verses of the traditional West Country carol. They all emphatically like figgy pudding, and the pictures provide a witty and unexpected account of what happens when there is none in the pantry and they won't go till they've got some. The exuberance of the pictures, and the wealth of amusing detail, will appeal equally to small children and discerning adults.

The Christmas Story combines the traditional and the new less happily. The story of the birth of Christ is told in the words of the King James' version of the Bible, but the illustrations fall disappointingly far short of the text. Hard coloured pencils have been used for the drawings, and there is little variation of technique for landscapes, interiors, or people. There is at times a disquieting element of caricature; the shepherds are scarcely less menacing than the justifiably repellent Herod. Certainly the gap toothed smile of one of them is unnerving, and the other two appear not so much simple, as simple-minded. An earnest desire for realism has produced harshly unattractive pictures, lacking in originality.

In contrast, the pictures in Ian Mogensen's *Mary's Christmas Present* are romantic, and charmingly so. Subtle colours evoke a snow-covered world: pale blue in the moonlight, or cold and beautiful under a watery sun. The pictures capture the look and feel of the enchanted winter days of childhood, and are much more interesting than the tale itself. This somewhat tediously involves a walking talking teddy bear, an anthropomorphic black bird, a small girl (scarcely surprising that she is rather taciturn) and a lost and found gold chain.

The Cobweb Christmas has a happier combination of words and pictures. The story reads well aloud, and it is affectionately and quirkily illustrated. Once upon a Christmastime in Germany, lived an old woman who had so many animals that her tiny cottage wasn't tidy. She didn't fuss till the days grew short and the

nights grew long. Then she made all her usual preparations and shared them with village children and animals. However, this Christmas proved to be a special one, a time of magic, and the beginning of the custom of decorating the tree with tinsel.

Leo's Christmas Surprise is also about preparations, this time contemporary ones in a situation which many readers will recognize. Leo, a likeable small boy, has sung a line or so of "Jingle Bells" and looked at his grandmother's Christmas cards and now doesn't know what to do. Everyone else is very busy, and Leo wanders from one member of the family to the next, but it is grandfather's activities which prove really puzzling, and eventually provide the happy surprise of the title. The pictures, which amusingly amplify the text, have an endearingly homely quality, and are distinguished from the run of the mill by their liveliness.

A final festive note is provided by John Porter's *The Party*. Detailed and inventive pictures, set out in cartoon style, are arranged on the page in traditional and regular fashion to portray actual events at the beginning. A small girl is intrigued by preparations for an adult party. Like many a child before and since, she persuades her parents to let her stay up for it. However, she finds it all boring in the extreme, until something odd happens. Before her fascinated gaze, the heads of the adults thrust into the hands of animals, and the party break up considerably. Her discovery next day that she had fallen asleep explains the phenomenon, but does not detract from the humour. To depict a happily lunatic fantasy, the pictures expand and burgeon. Succinct comments looming from various characters add to the fun.

Tracy Campbell Pearson: *We wish you a Merry Christmas*. Bodley Head. £4.50. 0 370 30975 8.

Ellas Trimby: *The Christmas Story*. Faber. £4.50. 0 571 13109 3.

Jan Morgenson: *Mary's Christmas Present*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.75. 0 241 11014 9.

Shirley Cline: *The Cobweb Christmas*. Illustrated by Joe Lasker. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 11053 X.

Nick Daly: *Leo's Christmas Surprise*. Collins. £4.50. 0 575 03274 X.

John Porter: *The Party*. Bodley Head. £4.95. 0 370 30509 4.

A Jungian influence in Judith Kerr's work, hinted at in the dream sequences in *Mog and the Baby* and *Mog's Christmas*, takes more definite form in her latest book *Mog in the Dark* (Collins. £3.95. 0 00 183769 9), which is probably the most alarming book in a series which is written in a series of chapters. The action takes place in the garden at night and this is contrasted with glimpses of the reassuring domesticity of the Thomas family watching television. Most of the "adventure" occurs within Mog's dream as

Cutting a dash

Julia Briggs

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FAITH JAGUES
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Our Village Shop
0434 94432
Hinemann. £4.95 each.

When is a book not a book? One answer might be "When it's a toy or a game". From surprisingly early on, publishers have shown interest in what is termed "play potential", though early examples of such marginalia arouse more enthusiasm in toy collectors than in historians of children's books. The use of a page or part of a page as an indicator of some kind goes back beyond the eighteenth century and John Newbery's *Little Lottery-Book for Children*, past George Withers' emblem book, complete with spinner for selecting the day's emblem, to the use of biblical stories, passages selected at random to provide guidance. Much more obviously non-books are those known in the trade as "novelty", books where pictures change by popping up or out, or flipping over; these too are almost as old as children's books themselves, having been around since Robert Sayer's "turn-up" books of the 1760s. The most elaborate and expensive examples are Victorian, though twisted their fragile nature and the inevitable clumsiness of their recipients, few have survived intact. Many of them involved quite complex feats of paper engineering, the variety of effects ranging from the simplest of pulled tabs through springs, strings and the interaction of a series of different sprockets and levers.

Looking at unlike books as they can manage to be, Walker Books' paper castles, complete with pop-out drawbridges, and telling one of those favourite fairy tales. They are made up of three hinged sections, two peep-show style wings flanking a central box from which a conical fold-out protrudes with the story upon it. They are gaily coloured and prettily drawn in the currently fashionable manner of Roby Kee and Andrew Mawson have not sufficiently allowed for the small scale they were working in, and too often the impact of the events illustrated is lost amid distracting detail. Each castle is given a distinctive architectural character and its own colour scheme, but these are inadequately related to the story; for example, *Beauty and the Beast*, visually the most coherent, uses a snake motif and the central concertina-fold opens out of a fanged mouth in the form of a ridged dragon's tail, yet this

arresting reptile has no connection with the Beast, who remains his traditional ursine self. These castles are just another example of the current emphasis on the visual element in children's books; too often it is allowed, even encouraged, to swamp the text and drain it of significance. The cost of such thoughtless subordination is that the artwork is isolated and fails to connect with, or hold, the imagination. We only want to look at it once.

Peepshows and pop-up books, like crackers, involve intensive labour. Just how much handwork goes into them is revealed by Maureen Roffey's ingenious *Make-Your-Own Pop-Up Circus Book*: here a series of pressed-out shapes, glued together in surprisingly complicated ways, make lions jump through hoops, weight-lifters raise their dumb-bells, and a crocodile emerges from a clown's trombone, at the tug of a tab. These home-made devices, apart from satisfying one's curiosity as to how such things are done, are unexpectedly strong, unlike the book's jokes. The dexterity required to assemble the paper mechanics correctly is not commensurate with the age-group the completed book seems intended for, so perhaps it should be made by an older child to give a younger one. An age gap between the maker and the user is a problem that most designers of paper models have failed to overcome.

Jasper Dimond's *Noah's Ark* becomes both a book and a model, since half of the pages tear off and reassemble to form a highly decorative ark, Noah, and his menagerie (not all of whom fit into the ark simultaneously, thus frustrating the literal-minded). This is a charming, if temporary, way of introducing that trusted character, who, with his entourage of animal couples, still appeals to the very young. So does Little Grey Rabbit, if only because parents brought up on her want to share her with their own children. Faith Jagues's delightful paper model house comes complete with movable furniture and the main protagonists. The colours of the house are much brighter, the outlines much sharper and more accurate, than those in Margaret Temper's original paintings, but only excessive plety would allow us to prefer the wishy-washy prototype. Faith Jagues also peddles nostalgia in the form of a model village shop, decorated with advertisements for Pears' Soap, Colman's Mustard and Stephens' Ink, equipped with baskets and barrels of goodies, and inhabited by Wellsian proprietors and customers.

Although it's possible to buy paper models of the Empire State Building, of space rockets and sports cars, this medium seems better suited to represent the toys or buildings of yesterday, the houses, shops and theatres of our grandparents, and not merely because they themselves were so fond of making all sorts of things out of paper, from cake decorations to scrap screens, but because somehow the whole business of settling down to model-making, scissors, gum and small impatient co-workers at hand, suggests a more leisured society than our own. (In which toys normally arrive already pressed out, coloured in and battery-driven). But at this time of the year a long Sunday afternoon before the fire, with model book and helpers affords an attractive prospect. Don't forget that the final product, like life itself, is better played with and torn a little than left to accumulate dust on the nursery shelf.

Sheep

The Truth about the Sheep alas
In that it leads a childish life
Head in the fairy-tale of grass
And never thinks about the knife.

They leap when shearers shave them bare.
"Look, we're lambs again", they bleat.
But their lambs lament and stare
"First you were wool but now you're meat!"
Heavy harvest on the trot
Bags of cash that sit in clover
Where would Sheep be if they were not?
Sheep would long ago be over.

TED HUGHES

Object lessons

Celina Fox

MARIANNE FORD
Copycats
Illustrated by Anna Pugh
Deutsch. £6.95.
0233 97584 5

I once watched a party of schoolchildren in the Public Records Office Museum, who had discovered to their delight that by simultaneously stroking the carpet with their feet and the metal showcase frames with their hands, they could experience a considerable electric shock. The assumed order of priorities in a museum - temple of culture rather than fun palace - is rarely grasped instinctively by the average child. This excellent book, however, seeks to make the combination of enjoyment and instruction painless, if not quite effortless.

The author explains in the foreword that she took some children on a cold wet afternoon to see a Russian Imperial Easter Egg. The outing was a success and having bought some silk, sequins, pearls and sawdust, they set about making their own jewelled eggs. Encouraged by the children's enthusiasm and the grown-ups' appreciation, she embarked on a "Rainy Days" collection. In order to qualify, each subject had to have enough history to stimulate a visit to a museum, art gallery or historic house, and each artefact had to be sufficiently interesting to inspire an associated project.

The outcome is a well-planned imaginative book. Each subject is accompanied by a lively account of its history, spiced with apt quotations and examples, as well as a step-by-step series of drawings of the associated projects. The text is further enhanced by illustrations from a wide range of sources. The pomander project is embellished with a fine silver-gilt Flemish example, from which enamelled segments open to reveal a choice of six fragrances. The gingerbread man is a dashing curly-headed cavalier. The section on how to make Halloween disguises is accompanied by an elaborate gilded papier-mâché Siamese mask of the Demon Prince Ravans. Even the humble apron-bane of many a schoolgirl's needlework lesson - is transformed by the seductive presence of a pottery Minoan snake goddess on the same page. The compilation is testament to the belief that children can be inspired by works of art, instead of being patronized by over-simple

lessons in making ugly objects.

Given school economies in craft activities, these extra-curricular schemes are increasingly important in encouraging creativity at little cost. Instead, there is a good chance that any child who successfully follows the projects in this book would be able to compete with students from the Inchbold School of Design. There is more than a *soupeon* of Fulham Road interior decoration in the skills advanced, with instructions on marbling and other painted finishes, stencilling and appliqué hangings, silhouettes and Flora Delanica. Not that all the lessons are so parochial. American crafts are strongly represented with beautiful illustrations of hooked rag rugs, quilts, an Uncle Sam money box and a witch on a broomstick whirligig. There are also Greek rattles, Roman dolls and games, and a Japanese influence on the sections on kites, lacquered shells and wooden boxes.

Although many of the diagrams showing frilly-cuffed fingers at work strongly suggest that the book is intended primarily for girls, some of the historical illustrations are more broad-minded. Private Thomas Walker is painted by T. W. Wood quilting while convalescing in his hospital bed during the Crimean War. Four examples are shown from a collection of straw marquetry, made by French prisoners at Norman Cross Camp during the Napoleonic Wars. There is an early nineteenth-century illustration of "The Wensley Dale Knitters", from George Walker's *Costume in Yorkshire*, which shows men alongside women and children busy knitting in the village street.

The book ends with notes on each project, which are endearingly frank. We learn that making paper creates an awful mess and that the gold ink used for lino cuts is still tacky after two years; on the other hand, making bow ties was a great success. Thoughtfully, the author mentions that Swarfa is an invaluable asset when working with oil paints or glue. The acknowledgments and bibliography are full and generous, in contrast to the usual perfunctory and inaccurate nature of such compilations. My only quibble is the title. "Copycats" has a pejorative connotation, indicating that the subject is either too stupid, lazy or unimaginative to think for himself. On the contrary, this book should stimulate a wide range of creative activity among children when they are at their most imaginative, practical and acquisitive.



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Valentine Cunningham

HERGÉ
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The Making of Tintin
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Methuen

The career of "le jeune globe-trotter", as the various French versions of *Le Lotus Bleu* label their hero, trots unstoppably on and on. The arrival in Britain of *The Blue Lotus* is only the latest manifestation of our share in Tintin's triumphal progress across the globe. *The Blue Lotus* dates from 1934. It starts in India, but, topically for 1934, moves swiftly on to China – mainly in and about the Shanghai International Settlement. Tintin is up against the wily head of the drug traffickers who, it now turns out, wasn't killed in his fall down the precipice at the end of *Cigars of the Pharaoh*: convincing though that event looked to you and me. This villain, who is unmasked in the course of the volume, is in league with an even more villainous Japanese called Mitsuhirato. And he has on call, seemingly, an endless supply of Chinese thugs who come provided with all the nasty kit they need, from a handy opium den and numerous motor vehicles to the more mundane guns, blackjacks, poisons, knives and a camera rigged to shoot people rather than pictures of people. Clearly no run-of-the-mill crook, Mitsuhirato also has a British Police Chief, sections of the British Army, not to mention the whole of the Japanese Army and Airforce, on his side. No wonder Tintin is kept constantly dodging and ducking in an incident-prone narrative which stutters agilely through a protracted and sensational series of little suspenses that are geared deftly into the larger international play between warmongering Japan and peace-loving China. Troubles, in fact, could scarcely come more densely nor on more dramatic a scale than this for the young Tintin.

risers to the occasion. When he's finished with them, the Japanese have no recourse left but to resign from the League of Nations. After which, as is his wont, his taste for the world's trouble-spots undiminished, Tintin simply sails away in the book's last frame for fresh instalments of danger elsewhere.

He is headed for South America and *The Broken Ear*. After that will come Scotland (*The Black Island*) and the Balkans (*King Ottokar's Sceptre*). Before Shanghai he had visited the Soviet Union, the Belgian Congo, the United States of America and Egypt. The young Belgian's zest for gobbling up the problems of other people's countries was insatiable. In the Congo in 1930 Tintin possesses Africa with the same aplomb as his and Hergé's homeland Belgium did. In the first version of *Tintin au Congo* Tintin tries teaching a mission-class of Africans about "voire patrie; la Belgique". A leopard sneaks in and interrupts this bit of colonialist pedagogy but Tintin smugly shows the animal who's master with the blackboard sponge, the school cane and a hard kick. Other creatures are made to get the same sort of point. (Perhaps it is what Tintin does to a rhino with a brace and bit and stick of dynamite that has kept the book from being translated into English for so long.) In the story Hergé's Congolese love what Hergé's hero dishes out.

Hergé appears to criticize only the imperialism of nations other than his own. The behaviour abroad of Germans, Russians, Greeks, Americans, Britons and Japanese is what appals Tintin. Many of his troubles in *The Blue Lotus* stem from his intervention between Gibbons, one more of Hergé's several ugly American business men, and a hapless rich-shaw boy. Egged on by the British Police Chief and another obviously British clubland buffer, Gibbons rants about the "yellow rabble" and tries to teach a polite Chinese waiter ("yellow scum") some manners. In 1934 Hergé didn't have to work hard to prove that the Japanese were aggressors against the Chinese, but his dislike of British and American ruthlessness and of their contempt for foreigners was

scarcely less strong. Nor did he care for Anglo-American pride in knowing acquiescence. "A true Japanese knows everything, honourable sir", declares the slimy hypocrite Mitsuhirato to Tintin. "Un vrai Japonais sait tout." In identical tones the cheating oil-man assured Tintin earlier in *Tintin en Amérique* (1931) that "Un businessman américain se trompe jamais". When Tintin in *The Blue Lotus* rescues Chang from drowning – and this is the volume in which the two friends first meet – he offers the Chinese boy a lengthy lesson on the stupidity in general of European attitudes to the Chinese. Belgians, though, don't seem to be implicated in the charge. The scene offers us a pair of boyish goodies. Tintin and Chang, little Belgian and put-upon China, occupying a high moral zone of international understanding and mutual regard for humanity against the universal wickedness of all other nations and powers.

Selling Hergé's books outside Belgium was not the least of the difficulties that got in the way of this sort of thing. Once Tintin reached wider markets his act needed some lusty tidying up. Now, impoverished redskins no longer embarrass Anglo-American readers by begging money from Tintin in *America*. The forty-four lynched negroes of that adventure aren't now mentionable. Just so, the extraordinary *Tintin au Pays des Soviets* (1929), with its foolish "communism anglais" enthusing over "les beautés du Bolchevisme" ("Beautiful", they say, pointing their cameras at bogus factories, "very nice") has only ever been reprinted in a few copies for Hergé's private use and in volume one of the *Archives Hergé* (1973), as historical material only. And *nos les Anglais* still haven't had the anti-imperialist Chinese slogans of *The Blue Lotus* translated for us – even though they've now been made available twice over to the French reader (in *Archives Hergé*, Vol 3, 1979, and in *Le Musée Imaginaire de Tintin*, 1980). And, of course, the thuggish soldiers who try to beat up Tintin in police custody in *The Blue Lotus* are now three huge Sikhs whose pains go unrewarded; whereas originally they were a trio of British Tommies labelled Smith, Brown and MacIntosh who got medals and commendations from the British Army and British politicians for their British efforts even as they lay bandaged in the hospital beds to which Tintin's fist had consigned them.

But such rewritings, like Tintin's pact of friendship with Chang, are only dabbs of cosmetic, face-lifts that cannot alter the fundamental colonialist bone-structure of Hergé's and Tintin's doings. *Tintin au Congo* has never been withdrawn, even though Tintin's mission school lesson is now on arithmetic rather than "la lointaine Belgique". And Tintin and Hergé never actually stopped collecting other people's stuff. Le Musée Imaginaire de Tintin is an imperialist's treasure-house. The search for *Red Rackham's Treasure* begins in a diving equipment shop that's indistinguishable from a museum and ends not on some treasure island but in Marlinspike Hall's museum of a basement. Finding it depends on the hoarding lusts of Aristides Silk, the pincher and cataloguer of other people's wallets, as they're revealed in *The Secret of the Unicorn* ("I'm not a thief. But I'm a bit of a... kleptomaniac"). After *The Blue Lotus* Tintin's adventures start again at the opening page of *The Broken Ear* in a Museum of Ethnography. In a sense Tintin is scarcely ever out of that museum. Each of these early stories offers us a collection of ethnographical types and stereotypes. Furthermore, each one hoards the ethnographical debris, the treasures taken from overseas, the masks, fetishes, and the like, with which the strips are studded. Hergé had a fetish about fetishes. And fetishes are only the sharpest instances of the fetishistic role things enjoy in his stories. One wonders whether this isn't why Captain Haddock's roster of curses includes "iconoclasm". It's only appropriate that *The Making of Tintin* should package up *The Secret of the Unicorn* and *Red Rackham's Treasure* with a lot of illustrative detail about Hergé's love of and care about the objects, from idols to ships, that appear in those stories. And there are more objects where those came from. *Le Musée Imaginaire de Tintin* concentrates on the more "primitive" exotica, juxtaposing frames from Tintin stories in which they appear against photos from Belgian museums of the

ethnographical objects that have over the years inspired Tintin's creator.

Such collocations serve to emphasize the life that the things in the Tintin strips have more than the people. The older objects are laden with history. The newer ones acquire that's why they've often been modernized in the stories have been revised. The planes and the police uniforms in *The Black Island*, for instance, have now been brought up to date. A newsreel shot of Sir Malcolm Campbell in Bluebird has been dropped from *The Blue Lotus* as perhaps too dated an allusion. The characters, on the other hand, have a kind of antiseptic timelessness. Tintin's haircut and physiognomy have never been altered. Like the Thompsons look the same now as they've always done. And so on. Can it be, in fact, that things in Hergé enjoy the rich and messy realities of diachrony and reference while his people are stuck in the impoverished prison of an unchanging signifier, the thin dimension of synchronicity?

Complex things; simple people? Certainly Tintin owes his success among the young to appearance as the archetypically uncomplicated comic-strip hero. Morally he is Master Chu Impure thoughts are far from his mind. His unsullied by the world's mess that he stinks through. When he's offered cash, as he always is, and not least in *The Blue Lotus*, by crooked exploiters, the non-Belgian colonialists, to induce him to abandon the struggle against wickedness and go over to the side of the baddies, he always spurns it vehemently. He prefers the clean fist to the dubious gun. Even though he inevitably totes a pistol, his fights fair. Very early in his career his taste for gratuitous violence got rinsed away. (In the first version of *The Blue Lotus* he slams a door into a gunman's face unnecessarily but the whole scene has now been purged.)

Tintin's opponents are fakers, the madest *faux-monnayeurs*. Great authorial effort has gone into offering his personal and social morality as transparently good. And that transparency isn't isolated. Equally important are those difficult situations, known crises in the world's text, that Tintin is always coping so smoothly with. Like that other Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, Tintin affects to keep a clear head. In *The Blue Lotus* he's characteristically putting down opium smugglers and overcoming the effects of chloroform. "A madness drug" doesn't hurt him. Sprawled among the opium den dopers he's the only conscious with his wits wholly about him. No coded messages, faked notes, crooked grammars, hold for him no terrors of interpretation. However obscured, their secrets soon seal their hermetics to his hermeneutics. Tintin's space is jammed with seers and doers who have gone mad with the strain of reality and interpreting – Professor Calculus, Professor Alembick, Sophocles Sarcophagus, and *The Blue Lotus* the gruesome but truth-telling fakir. But Tintin proves you can be a master interpreter without also being an expert eccentric. You can combine being white and clean and boyish and nice, even knowing the bookish, readily interpreter's world of the ham's loot in the sculptured globe at the foot of the statue of "St John the Evangelist", wrote the Eagle of Patmos – after the island where the Revelation was revealed. Treasure and reality don't come in well-stocked mental museums; bookish places built out of many bits of literature.

Least, however, this worry too much for the young reader who's keener on Tintin than on the action than on Tintin the reader and writer. Tintin's journalism has been greatly played down over the years, and so also has the reliance on books for guidance. In the revised version of *The Blue Lotus* Tintin was shown reading a book called *La Chine* en route to China reading a book called *La Chine*. That's how Hergé got there too. But Tintin's now his without books, as if by magic. Tintin's mystification about Tintin's capcity to extend his right to possess and know the world has been increased rather than being cleared up or away. In other words, the stunts of *Tintin au Congo* are more or less strong – and for adult readers of Hergé, at least, as worrying – as they ever were.

A land of wishes

Idris Parry

MICHAEL ENDE
The Neverending Story
Translated by Ralph Manheim
30pp. Allen Lane. £8.95.
01918 15099

This book is about passion. So is every book that is worth reading – about the passion which makes more of life than is apparent at first glance. Early in the novel, (which has sold more than a million copies in the original German), the author says: "Human passions plus-mysteries they've been emptied of history." The Thompsons look the same now as they've always done. And so on. Can it be, in fact, that things in Hergé enjoy the rich and messy realities of diachrony and reference while his people are stuck in the impoverished prison of an unchanging signifier, the thin dimension of synchronicity?

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modic flexibility of human ideas when freed from the restraints of habit. But Fantastica is decaying, its Empress is sick. This means that humans are neglecting their power of imagination, because only humans can give the names which make and preserve Fantastica. The decline of Fantastica implies that the human world is sick too. Without fantasy the human world is impoverished. The two realms are interdependent. The apparent opposites of fairy-tale and reality support each other.

Endo is optimistic. To believe that Fantastica is a neverending story must mean he has faith in the healthy survival of the human imagination. It certainly survives in this book. There are some places where explanatory arguments bring philosophical implications close to the surface, but these are few and not too distracting. There's symbolic significance on every page, but the book can be read simply as a tale of magical adventure, pursuit and delay, danger, suspense, triumph. And always, throughout the book, there is the delight of this author's tremendous invention of strange figures which explode like Bruegel in print. The print, incidentally, is in red and green, a fairy-tale in itself.



Peter Baston's frontispiece to *The Chimneys of Green Knowe*. From *A Dictionary of British Book Illustrators: The Twentieth Century* by Lucy Micklethwait and Bridget Peppin (336pp. John Murray. £25.07195 39854).

Other worldliness

Calen Strawson

ESAM COOPER
Wonders
30pp. Bodley Head. £5.95.
03009952

Carved mirrors, indefinitely caverous copboards, hitherto unnoticed doors, such things are rare in our world, but not all rare. Through them, as is well known, we find many paths to other adjacent worlds; worlds which lie or are the probably already implied in some way, whether by prophecy, Dopplegänger, or simple fate; worlds which are not exception medieval, magical and really melodramatic – "M-worlds", for short. One enters an M-world by mistake, or by one's will; invariably one is lumbered with a task or quest. One duly progresses through a series of reverses towards the real-ness of a suitably homiletic

hands, fleeing from the intolerable strains of the sweet selkie-singing. Westerly is searching for his father, Cally for her ailing parents. Both are on the brink of adolescence. They must go west towards the sea. And so they do, in an intensely eventful manner, moving at high speed through an imaginative and confidently narrated if somewhat overworked series of adventures. They meet Lugan, who is Life, and two-faced Tarnis, his mother, sister and daughter, who is Death. Both have designs on the two children. He, therefore, protects them, she pursues them with deadly intent. They travel through forests and over lakes. They take refuge in a tower which is destroyed by the Stone People, and where Lugan's Dragon fights Tarnis's Stonecutter. Cally is turned to stone; but revived by Lugan's birds. In the intestines of the earth they meet Snake, a master sensualist who reveals the selkie secret. They cross a blinding desert and scale a towering mountain, with the help of six-legged Peth, charming, honourable and antennaeed, one of Lugan's folk. Cally nearly gives up in despair, but Westerly is magnificent; and they come down at last through gentle foothills to the coast. They fall in love and reach the sea. Suddenly the medieval world is alive with schooners and clamouring alarms, and Cally and Westerly face Life, Death and a Choice: eternal youth in the timeless land of Tir na n'Og, forever on the brink of adult love, or life in time – a return to the real world (ours), separation and struggle, and eventual meeting. *Seaward* overbalances slightly at this point, top heavy with homily. But Cally and Westerly make the right choice, and Susan Cooper's fluent if almost too professional tale comes to a good end.

The reader as hero

Colin Greenland

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The Forest of Doom
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Puffin. £1.50 0 14 0315381.
STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
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0140952373

You are an adventurer in a world of monsters and magic, living by quickness of wit and skill of sword. You earn your gold as a hired warrior, usually in the employ of rich nobles and barons on missions too dangerous or difficult for their own men. Slaying monsters and fearsome beasts in pursuit of some fabled treasure comes as second nature to you.

You are fourteen next birthday. You are probably male; but if not, you must not object to having male assumptions made on your behalf. For you walk among male myths of great age and sanctity. You are too intelligent for the ferocious devotion with which your contemporaries are currently obliterating battalions of video blips. Nevertheless, ritualized mayhem of some sort is an appealing pastime. Though your fantasies are heroic, it is not necessarily because you are solitary, shy, or skinny; but if you are, it doesn't matter. You will devour these books, compulsively, remaining rapt for long periods of time. You, and thousands like you, will keep these "fighting fantasy" books, at the top of the bestseller lists.

The principle is simple. The continuing adventures of any hero from Gilgamesh to Luke Skywalker can be represented spatially, as a map. Every so often there occurs a choice: left? right? straight ahead? Every so often a marvel or monster intervenes and must be circumvented or dispatched. The map can be summarized in a flow diagram, each element one phase of the story. The elements are numbered and linked by connections of cause and effect, incident and outcome. The three small creatures are human-like but have green skin, pointed ears and slit-like eyes. Will you:

Draw your sword and prepare to fight them? Turn to 286
Look in your pack for something to offer them? Turn to 3
Walk confidently across the room to the far door? Turn to 366

This system, of course, allows places to plot all the things that *didn't* happen: Oedipus letting Laius pass, Beowulf meeting Sinbad, Golum throttling Bilbo. You decide. You, by complex operation of dice, fight the battles. "YOU become the hero!" declares the oracular book. You can be killed. And then you can come back and do it all over again, just as Freizer always said, but *differently*.

In a sense that is what it's all about. These quantified dreams offer a bored youngster gratification in safety. On the one hand, the exhilaration of mighty triumphs and close shaves; on the other, the Valhalla promise that, if the goblins do eviscerate you, you can try again tomorrow. The structural transitions are morally honest. Aggression will not always get you through, and usually exposes you to greater danger. People who look nasty can be nice, and vice versa. But however chaotic the ciandel, ultimately the ramifications of possibility must be finite, and every tale have its ending. The grail is attained more by luck than judgment. It is frustrating sometimes to be given only two bad choices, with no allowance for your third, much cleverer idea. The heroic world is god-bound, and thoroughly determined. That is, perhaps, part of its attraction to adolescents. The ravens of demons ruled by dice are more manageable than the inscrutable grievances of adults and the ambiguous challenge of the opposite sex. Here, everything that hinders you is evil, everything that helps you, good.

In one sense it is clearly anti-narrative. The mode was first used by Raymond Queneau, presumably to subvert the oppressive linearity of fiction. But, more importantly, these are not books; nor are they substitutes for books; nor are they seductions to literacy. They are mazes, ornate and elaborate mazes coded on several levels, but mazes none the less. They are *game programs* that will be published in "fiche" form as soon as every teenager has a pocket computer, but until then they will have to be printed up as books. For, although Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone are becoming ever more sophisticated, the books are prototypes. What remains to be added is why, highly modern technology and technique should come in shapes from ancient mysteries and the most obscure depths of history.

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Guinea-pigs

Anthony Horowitz

ROBERT CORMIER
The Bumblebee Flies Anyway
241pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0575 033274

Behind the singularly unappealing dust-jacket and the clumsy – if apposite – title of Robert Cormier's latest book is a novel you are unlikely to forget. It is a startling piece of writing: sometimes brutal, sometimes distasteful, but always uncompromisingly honest.

The story takes place in an experimental hospital in America where terminally ill patients are being used as voluntary guinea-pigs for new medical treatments. The central character, seventeen-year-old Barney Snow, is having his memory altered by a newly discovered chemical process. Barney is an outsider, different from the other patients. He alone is not dying. But his discovery of the true nature of the experiments being performed on him provides a horrifying twist of a kind rarely encountered in either adult or teenage fiction.

That this is teenage rather than adult fiction – and as in all Cormier's work, the distinction is a narrow one – is only indicated by the story itself. Barney steals a wooden cut-out of a car from a neighbouring junk-yard to treat a rich, wasted friend to "one big wild ride". Given the context, some sort of narrative relief is doubtless necessary. But in a curious way it also diverts from the reality of the situation. As Barney climbs fences and drags large pieces of

wood through the hospital to a conveniently abandoned attic, it is all too easy to pull back from your involvement by reminding yourself that this is, after all, just a story.

Whatever their activities, however, the characters are never less than wholly credible. Barney is helped in his endeavours by the wheelchair-bound Billy the Kidney and the pathetic, spastic Allie. The relationship between these three is masterfully handled. They are friends in the tradition of all teenagers on adventures. But at the same time they hardly dare acknowledge that friendship, knowing its inevitable end. They live in self-made compartments. Together but alone.

Cormier's style of writing is equally merciless. A description of the spastic boy: "His hands were spiders forever climbing invisible webs." An injection is: "the slice of pain in his arm that admitted the merchandise." The language of the hospital itself is one of its starkest horrors. Patients are "residents", drugs are "merchandise", the doctor is "The Handyman" and pain is never mentioned in deference to "discomfort".

The Bumblebee Flies Anyway raises some profound questions about medical ethics, about manipulation and about the attitudes to death of the dying and those closest to them. Even more enduring, however, are the final images of the book where, despite everything, a mood of magnificent optimism prevails, soaring from the terrible mundanity of pain, and suffering to the inspiring and poetic victory of the unbroken human spirit.

Prototypes

Sarah Hayes

BETSY BYARS
The Glory Girl
114pp. Bodley Head. £4.95.
0370 309979

Take an eleven-year-old, who doesn't fit in. Add a dead or hostile parent and a rich compensatory fantasy life. Throw in a happening to make your protagonist accept himself; and there you have a Betsy Byars novel. Same story, same mental furniture, same sad-comic attitude to life. Enid Blyton used to say her books were like cotton reels: all she had to do was unroll the thread. With Betsy Byars it's more like barbed wire she's unrolling, but the principle is the same. Byars novels are formula products, without a doubt; not the comfortable quality formulas of Nesbit, Sutcliffe or Garner, but irritating psycho-social formulas. Yet, in the teeth of such criticism, each novel works.

The Glory Girl is no exception. It succeeds in spite of itself. Only one interesting thing happens, but the novel can be read at high speed. The characters are selfish and sad, but they are funny too. The story runs to a lean hundred and fourteen pages, but it is all meat. The barest of statements – Betsy Byars has no time for description – can convey a whole person. Take the heroine's horrible father: at home he is a tyrant: "When anybody saw Mr Glory in a rage, they never doubted that people had evolved from animals." On stage, with a sympathetic audience, he is happy, but only for a moment: "Mr Glory ran his hands through his

limp hair. He needed another body permanent."

Each member of the Glory family is weak and self-centred in a different (but believable) way. The mother, oppressed and teetotal; the older sister, careless and pretty; the younger twin brothers, hyperactive and impossible. Only Anna is not; but she can only think of herself in negatives, for she is the only person in the Glory family who cannot sing. Doomed to stand forever at the back of freezing halls selling tapes and records of the Glory Gospel Singers, Anna feels essentially separate from her family and alone. When Uncle New is parolled from jail and the fragile equilibrium of the Glory family is upset, Anna hopes for escape. But New, an ex-bank robber, is pathetic – shy and institutionalized. No way does he want to be a part of his brother's tawdry little empire. When he rescues the family from a horrifying car accident, New disappears before anyone can say thank you. He returns briefly a few months later, slips into the back of a hall to tell Anna that she is "the best of the bunch". As the interval lights go on, Anna stands up with her tray of cassettes and smiles for the first time in her life.

Where this book differs from most of its predecessors is in its bleak conclusion. Anna has no special gift to help her cope, and all she discovers by the end of the story is her own generous nature, which isn't going to take her very far. Adult readers, trained to expect the sour-sweet, won't mind, but children may long for a Noel Streetfield-type hidden talent, and might feel just a little cheated by this small and masterpiece.

Stretching sympathies

Nicholas Tucker

ALISON PRINCE
Goodbye Summer
160pp. Methuen. £6.50.
0416 446000

Alison Prince is a good writer; her sentences have an authority that normally makes it easy for readers to sit back and let the story take over. Even so, *Goodbye Summer* does not come off: it remains only a half-successful attempt at describing a bright, attractive teenage heroine's infatuation with an empty, self-admiring young stud. This is not an easy assignment for any author, since the only things really going for Nick – the anti-hero – are his dark eye-lashes, tousled hair, leather jacket, big square teeth and the "thin flat sides of his face that break into creases when he smiles". Otherwise he comes over as a selfish jerk. In a film (played by John Travolta) or an illustrated love-comic (played by a Travolta look-alike) the overriding physical attractions of so dreary a person could just become credible. In cold print, the passion he causes in someone so clearly his superior seems

silly rather than tragic, and sympathies become dangerously stretched before Sasha – the heroine – decides to pack him in.

Linked to this theme is a running battle. Sasha has with her menopausal mother and her more benign, intermittently present bank-manager father. Why is he so often away? Yes, he is having an affair too; something Sasha talks through with him and determines to solve in a rush of moral tidying up that occurs in the last few pages. By this time, she has settled down to learning the fashion trade with Mr and Mrs Abrahams, an elderly Jewish dream-dick pair of employers, all hugs, twinkling smiles and gentle chuckles. And Sasha turns out to be a talented model as well as possessing "some flair" at cutting and designing.

All this later, rather soft-centred surreal story somewhat dissipates tension nearworthwhile so that Nick's growing snarls and Sasha's unhappy (and well described) drunkenness are a party make less impact that they should. When Nick finally fails to turn up, stays away and then turns up again, there is an element of "what?" as well as "Quiet Autumn sunshine" in the air. *Goodbye Summer* is aimed at older readers and some may quite enjoy it.

Form and physiology

Jennifer Creer

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876. The Integumentary System
877. The Sensory System
878. The Reproductive System
879. The Endocrine System
880. The Muscular System
881. The Circulatory System
882. The Respiratory System
883. The Excretory System
884. The Integumentary System
885. The Sensory System
886. The Reproductive System
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888. The Muscular System
889. The Circulatory System
890. The Respiratory System
891. The Excretory System
892. The Integumentary System
893. The Sensory System
894. The Reproductive System
895. The Endocrine System
896. The Muscular System
897. The Circulatory System
898. The Respiratory System
899

A nose for success

Allen Kurzweil

CARLO COLLODI

Le Avventure di Pinocchio
Edited by Ornella Castellani Pollidori
282pp. Pescara: Fondazione Nazionale Carlo
Collodi. L.60,000
Le avventure di Pinocchio
Edited by Fernando Tempesti.
254pp. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori. L.12,000.

Everyone knows the story of the immaculately conceived carpenter's son, whose wayward travels led to betrayal, death and resurrection. It has been the subject of countless school projects, advertising campaigns, jingles, jokes, cartoons. In his birthplace, Florence, this pinion-kneed Puppet, named Pinocchio, is worshipped like a relic of the True Cross: how fitting that he too should be celebrating a holy year. "Pinocchio turns 100", shout the nation's newspapers, who have, in fact, been extolling the virtues of the century-old tale for the past three years. Now two scholars have joined in the chorus.

The critical editions of *Le Avventure di Pinocchio* by Ornella Castellani Pollidori and Fernando Tempesti are not to be confused with the refurbished reprints, which fill the bookshops. Pollidori has produced a lavish variorum edition which will appeal to the student of nineteenth-century linguistics, while the pocket-sized Tempesti edition seems directed at everyone else.

Carlo Collodi, a Florentine journalist, translator and teacher, originally wrote the story of Pinocchio for a Rome children's weekly called *Giornale per i bambini*. On July 7, 1881, Pinocchio embarked on a year and a half of serialized misadventures that ended after thirty-six episodes; on January 25, 1883 the prodigal puppet turned into a good little boy, an obedient *ragazzino perbene*.

Le Avventure di Pinocchio is not so much a simple story as a miniature encyclopedia of nineteenth-century Italian life. In each episode Pinocchio gets into trouble so that his protectors - Geppetto, the Talking Cricket, the Fairy with the Blue Hair - can rescue him and dispense one of Collodi's authorial commandments: Don't steal! Work hard! Listen to your parents! or Lying is wrong! Italian children of that time, it seems, could overlook the heavy-handed nudgings and pious exclamations because the language of *Pinocchio* was refreshingly direct and resonant with the cadences of everyday speech.

Soon after the serial ended, the book was published, enriching Collodi by 500 lire, and arguably adding some wealth to the treasuries of Italian literature. The first edition differed from the *Giornale* version. Words and phrases were substituted, spelling was corrected, punctuation adjusted. Then in 1886 the second edition came out and it differed from the first. No copy of the third can be found. The fourth and fifth printings were the last to be issued before Collodi died in 1890 and both versions bore emendations.

The key question Pollidori raises in her weighty annotation of the tale is which of the

five versions best captures the writer's intentions. Her method is essentially diacritical, isolating the linguistic mutations of the various editions and connecting them to the language of the author's native Florence. Her investigation begins with a brief but thorough description of the editorial and financial flinching that anticipated the story's publication. The postcards and letters between Collodi and his editors are all good fun, dealing as they do with the badgering of a notoriously slothful writer by his pressured employers. We learn that the *Giornale* paid Collodi at the handsome rate of 20 centesimi a line, which perhaps explains the expansive, garrulous quality of the prose. Furthermore, it seems that a need for money pushed Collodi to reanimate the puppet after the fifteenth episode though boredom had greatly sapped his enthusiasm. Had the tale ended prematurely, Pinocchio would have remained a puppet and the famous "growing the nose" passage would never have appeared.

After giving this background, Pollidori moves to some complex analysis of the first five editions. With the trained eye of the lexical comparatist, she pores over the dictionaries of Florentinisms and the encroaching language of a unified Italy. The clash between the regional purity of the Tuscan tongue and Italian is mirrored in the hundreds of minor changes that appeared in the text. Though the national voice won a number of small editorial skirmishes, Pollidori concludes that *Pinocchio* remains fundamentally Tuscan.

Nearly all the corrections Collodi made are minor, but even the simplest typographical mistake can prove interesting. Did Collodi subject Pinocchio to a stormy night in winter (*inverno*) or was the night hellish (*inferno*)? After several pages of analysis Pollidori allies the text with another Florentine epic and chooses *inferno*. This spelling appears in the fifth edition of the tale, and it is this edition that Pollidori finds palimpsestic. Collodi's editing peels layers over all editions, but it is the last which, in Pollidori's opinion, best reflects his intentions.

"Wrong!" exclaims Fernando Tempesti in the introduction to "his" annotated tale. Attacking Pollidori's viewpoint, Tempesti argues that Collodi corrected only the first edition. He goes even further. The adventures aren't so much a linguistic battlefield as a theatre in which Collodi pieces together lively dialogue. For Tempesti, the importance of the tale rests in the colloquial tone that evokes the rhythms of "spoken culture". This rebuttal touches only one of the debates in which Tempesti engages. And as the bibliography that follows this refutation makes clear, he had dedicated much of his career to the sub-discipline of *pinocchioana*. Filling twenty-five pages, the bibliography shows that Collodi's output included a booklet on the family porcelain business, and a translation of Perrault's fairy tales. (Both are still in print.) The educational reforms that took place in Italy during the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to an increase in the whole education business and Collodi responded with more than a dozen textbooks and some popular, if somewhat tendentious, "instructional" tales. Most of this output has been

forgotten. Yet, as the bibliography of books about Collodi makes clear, *Pinocchio* not only survives, but has become a national icon.

In his scrupulous list of sources, Tempesti cites some 600 works on the puppet. We see at turns the wise and poetical reading of Giorgio Manganelli and the exacting essay of Italo Calvino. Articles by Paul Hazard, Benedetto Croce and Alberto Moravia are to be found among the monographs which link the boy-puppet to every literary creation from Alice to Zarathustra; Pinocchio as Neoplatonic quixotic Marxist everyman. Gérard Genot has mapped out the structuralist topology of the plot; others have explored Pinocchio's importance in Japan, Germany and the Soviet Union. There's even an essay in English on "Anglosaxon attitudes to Collodi in the seventies".

The bibliomania continues throughout Tempesti's annotated rendering of the tale. When Pinocchio tries to fry an egg, Tempesti cites the various recipes of the cookery writer Artusi, Collodi's contemporary. For each successive reference to food, the reader is given a gastronomic discourse on cauliflower, polenta and beans. Through the Talking Cricket Tempesti teaches us some insect anatomy. Pinocchio uses a coalsack and we are informed that these sacks, at least in the nineteenth century, were sewn from two pieces of matched cloth measuring one metre by fifty centimetres. When Collodi incinerates Pinocchio's feet in the sixth chapter of the book, he uses an incorrect verb. Tempesti gleefully explains that ashes could not have been produced if the puppet's legs were only "carbonized".

This kind of detailed analysis ignores some of the major structural flaws in the tale. The continuity of the tales is often faulty. Pinocchio wears a hat before Geppetto makes him one. On his way to school to learn to read, Pinocchio reads a sign that deters him. Sometimes Pinocchio lies and his nose doesn't grow. These are not clever ironies, but oversights. Writing penny-a-liners meant deadlines, and for Collodi deadlines meant fretful last-minute work. He made-up the tale as he went along and forgot (or chose to forget) a previous episode even if it conflicted with the next.

Perhaps because both have dedicated so many years to the study of this children's story, Tempesti and Pollidori do not confront the real weaknesses of *Pinocchio*. The few criticisms are buried under mountains of cross-references and refutations and neither edition asks the question: what is it that makes this puppet so popular? The punchy dialogue might explain the success of the book in Italy, but does not suggest why modernized adaptations on the original length sell so well in Holland, or why the tale works as a Japanese mask-play. The answer obviously rests in the book's most prominent gimmick: the nose. With his telescoping proboscis, Pinocchio has pushed ahead of his cousins in the *commedia dell'arte*, and can now bear the title of the world's best-known puppet. Collodi created an image. It is the silhouette and not the story that children love. The Japanese illustrator might give Pinocchio a surprisingly small nose, and the German might dress him in *Lederhosen*. No matter: Pinocchio is still Pinocchio.

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Letters

Keynes

So - Henry Harrod's creditable defence of his father's biography of John Maynard Keynes (Letters, November 18) inevitably seeks to divert argument on to minor points of exegesis, because he cannot answer the case that Sir Roy Harrod suppressed important aspects of Keynes's life for the sake of expediency, and failed to make clear that he was doing so. The sole point I was concerned to make with regard to Sir Roy's treatment of Keynes's membership of the Apostles was that his determination to "desist from prying into the affairs of that august body" took "heavy toll of his understanding of Keynes's philosophical development". I wrote in my introduction: "In his early to mid-twenties Keynes read the Society a dozen or so papers in which he developed his ethical position, and which include the earliest statement of his theory of Probability, dating from his undergraduate year. Harrod must have seen all these papers, yet he refers to none of them, and postpones the start of Keynes's work on Probability by some years, thus removing it from the context of his ethical concerns. As a result he never puts himself in a position to discuss the links between Keynes's ethics, his Probability theory, and his economics."

Sir Roy's biographical "purpose" clearly did not require him to discuss these papers; mine did. The fact that the words about not "prying into the affairs of that august body" occurred in one place rather than another strikes me as irrelevant to the argument.

ROBERT SKIDDELSKY,
10 Colborne Row, London N1.

Edwin Drood

Sir, - I much enjoyed W. W. Robson's lucid essay on *Edwin Drood* (November 11). However, I missed in it what I have missed in everything else I have read on the subject: any reference to Dickens's plain hint that the novel contains another murder, which occurred one year to the day before Drood's disappearance. In Chapter 12, Durdles recalls it:

"And here I felt asleep. And what woke me? The ghost of a cry. The ghost of one terrific shriek, which struck me followed by the howl of a dog: a long, drawn-out wailing howl, such as a dog gives when a person is dead. That was my last Christmas Eve."

This shriek (surely?) is the "fellow-traveller" whose death Jasper simultaneously re-enacts and rehearses in his opium-vision in Chapter 22.

"How could the time be at hand unless the fellow-traveller was? Hush! The Journey's made. It's over."

"So soon?" asks the Princess Puffer.
"That's what I said to you. So soon. Wait a little. This is a vision. I shall sleep it off. It has been too short and easy. I must have a better vision than this; this is the poorest of all. No struggle, no consciousness of pain, no ecstasy - and yet I never saw that before."

"With a start. 'Saw what, do you?'"
"Look at it! Look what a poor, mean, miserable thing it is! That must be real. It's over."

The poor mean miserable thing which must be real must be the victim's howling dog. Jasper's nocturnal rambles with Durdles make far better sense if one supposes that, on the Christmas Eve before the novel opens, he killed some man unknown to us, and concealed the body in the crypt. It is the crypt-key which he needs from Durdles in his drugged sleep. It is about Durdles's investigations of ancient tombs in the crypt that he is always asking questions. At some time he plans to remove the body to a safer place.

"In my semi-solution, I should place even more stress on the original quality of Jasper's phrase, than do W. W. Robson and Angus Wilson. We know that by Chapter 23 the novel has become disappointing. 'You've never used to it, you see', explains the Princess Puffer. But Victorian physiologists would have attributed great potency to 'semi-solution'. (Perhaps) helped by the 'mysterious' Princess, (perhaps) helped by the 'mysterious' with their Oriental background, he decided to use this as the trap to catch him."

It is possible that Dickens may have known a young American, Pittsburgh Ludlow, who wrote *The Hush Factor* (1857), dealing with the experiences of the drug. I myself know a young man by the name of Ludlow, who has written a book, *The Hush Factor*, which makes Ludlow sound extraordinarily like Jasper.

He had always loved the Arabian Nights for its energy and scope of imagination, and, truly or not, regarding hashish, he said that the dreams it occasioned almost invariably assumed oriental forms. In his own fantasy, visions of China and gardens of the East commingled with American scenes of Niagara and the Hudson, and he passed through sensations of a dual existence, delirium, the power of a giant or a god, infinities of space and time, unutterable calm.

And who was Jasper's "fellow-traveller"? Well, his past and his name I cannot guess at, but I can guess at his career from a certain date. One Christmas Eve, with his dog as a witness, he was murderously attacked by John Jasper. His apparently dead, but probably merely "garroted" body was concealed in a tomb in the crypt. And from there he escaped, in the manner of Belzoni, the explorer of the Pyramids, who is more than once mentioned in the novel, with such apparent irrelevance.

And one day he reappeared in Cloisterham, wearing a white wig, and calling himself Dick Datchery.

RANDOLPH STOW,
28 King's Head Street, Harwich, Essex.

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RANDOLPH STOW,
28 King's Head Street, Harwich, Essex.

E. M. Forster

Sir, - Alan Hollinghurst's review of Volume 1 of the *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster* (November 18) was most intelligent and suggestive, so I hope you will not think it ungrateful if I say that one remark in it puzzles me considerably. He writes that "Contrary to the editors' claim, the *Letters* are as frustratingly uninformative as the *Life*." Now, actually, I rather go out of my way in the opening paragraphs of my introduction to *disclaim* that the *Letters* tell you secrets about Forster's creative processes. I write: "We must not expect, then, when reading Forster's letters, any more than from reading his biography, to trace the creator to his lair, or to find 'explanations' of his novels."

P. N. FURBANK,
Flat 1, 15 St Augustine's Road, London NW1.

'Sohar'

Sir, - It would of course have been unrealistic to expect a sympathetic review of my *Sohar: Culture and Society in an Omani Town* (September 23) from Dale Eickelman, who has adopted the role of spokesman for a theoretical position very different from the one I have long tried to develop. But I am distressed by the misapprehensions which his review must foster of both the substance and analysis contained in my book.

Your readers are told that "Barth's Suhari are 'fundamentally unsympathetic to each other's values and in part ignorant of them'". The quoted phrase appears, preceded by the words "in part", on page 8 of my book in a methodological discussion where I warn of the pitfalls of using only few informants as guides to the diversity found in culturally plural societies. My point, concretely, is that the members of one religious community, for example, may be in part both ignorant and unsympathetic to the theological dogmas of another religious group found in their town, as may members of one ethnic group be to the customs of another. But the persistent thrust of the whole study, introduced before page 8 and elaborated throughout the text until its concluding paragraph on page 254, concerns the remarkable *tolerance* which pervades both the ideology and praxis of Sohar society. This major theme receives no mention in Eickelman's review.

Next, and repeatedly, your readers are told of the "ruthless competition" I report to reign between the Suhari. I cannot locate such a phrase anywhere; but it is true that I characterize the market-place as the scene of "speculation, shrewdness" and cutthroat business dealings" (page 59). Elsewhere in the text, however, I dwell extensively on the exquisite politeness which Suhari cultivate in all their interpersonal relations, and the importance of "beautiful manners" in the Sohar concept of honour. The opening paragraph of Chapter 14, "The Operation of the Market", should resolve whatever contradiction the observant reader may have sensed between behaviour in the market-place and the ground rules of interaction elsewhere.

But Eickelman has not been an observant reader, and so he misses such major points, and also misleads his readers with the infelicitous he ascribes to me. He advises me to ask "how Suhari see and experience their own society" while questioning the adequacy of an image of protective walls and private gardens - identified as precisely the key metaphor used by Sohar townsmen for their society. Thereupon he adds a rider which the reader must understand as his corrective supplement to my statement, although it merely reiterates what my text states in the very next sentence (page 33). He rightly characterizes as "extraordinary" the assumption that Arabic-speaking peoples largely did not rule themselves till well into the 1950s - but indeed I say that these conditions obtained before 1914 (page 203). I could go through his critical remarks and asides one by one and show similar discrepancies between the statements attributed to me, and what my text says.

Even more difficult to arrest, Eickelman cultivates a style of expression which must create completely erroneous impressions in his reader even when he avoids giving direct misinformation. Observe his concluding sentence: "Barth, like Carleton Coon, whose now-discarded 'mosaic' image of the Middle East he characterizes as 'brilliant', has none the less succeeded in presenting at least some elements of identity and social style in a complex and fascinating community." Now Coon published his impressive *Caravan: The Story of the Middle East* thirty-three years ago, and it has been deservedly influential. As I show specifically with reference to Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and Lawrence Rosen's recent analysis of Moroccan society, Coon's concept of "mosaic" organization continues to structure anthropological conceptions of complex society in the Middle East. But a major purpose of my description and analysis of Sohar is precisely to break out of this conceptual mould; and pages 244-9 in the concluding chapter are devoted to demolishing Coon's "mosaic" image, and replacing it with a fundamentally different model. I must suppose that the readers of Eickelman's review will come away with the opposite impression.

FREDRIK BARTH,
Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo,
Frederiks gate 2, Oslo 1, Norway.

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FREDRIK BARTH,
Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo,
Frederiks gate 2, Oslo 1, Norway.

The York Plays

Sir, - Readers of Paula Neuss's review of my edition of the York Plays (November 11) may be interested to learn that the plea she makes near the end is already in process of being answered. Oxford University Press proposes to publish during 1984 a selection from the cycle, containing twenty-two of the forty-seven extant plays, including most of the York Realist's work. The selection will be based on the critical text, and will be accompanied by notes on the literary and dramatic qualities of the plays.

RICHARD BEADLE,
St John's College, Cambridge.

'Brave New World'

Sir, - Roland Littlewood, in his review of C. R. Badcock's *Madness and Modernity* (November 18), describes Aldous Huxley "mischievously" suggesting in *Brave New World* that historical dating could only start from Freud "as the first man who ever emancipated himself from the historical cycle". It was of course Freud (of the Model T) not Freud. Is this a Freudian slip?

DOREEN PRESTON,
10 Blinwood Avenue, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

We regret that, in Anthony Storr's review of E. M. Thornton's *Freud and Cocaine* (November 18), the name "Breuer" was misprinted as "Brewer".

In Dilys Powell's article (November 18), Philip Guedalla was referred to as having been "chairman of the British Council"; this should have read "Chairman of the film committee of the British Council".

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COMMENTARY

How to survive

Peter Kemp

Good Behaviour
BBC2
Our Man in Havana
Radio 4

Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour*, looking at a world of perfect breeding and disreputable coupling, is not merely a comedy of manners but a comedy about manners. Sardonicity, it surveys a hunting and riding set where public good form co-exists with a great deal of privately unbridled activity. Discrepancy gives the book its edge. Everywhere, there are splits between genteel outward appearance and rakish reality. Not for nothing is Temple Alice, the central character's Georgian home, riddled with dilapidation behind its graceful facade. And there is one fissure crucial to the novel's structure – the gap between what the narrator, Aroon, says is happening and what her account unknowingly reveals is happening.

It might have been thought that this technique – of a character incidentally exposing things whose significance she is blind to – would make the book tricky to dramatize. But Hugh Leonard's three-part television version, helped by very fine-tuned casting, met the challenge triumphantly. The props department was leaned on rather too heavily when it came to furnishing the period interiors, with the result that Temple Alice looked over-affluently spick and span. But, apart from this, the horsey, haughty Anglo-Irish life of the St Charles family – an existence apparently revolving round meets and the proprieties – was re-created with splendid assurance. Daniel Massey invested the Major with the right flushed fleshiness and grunted affability, and authentically caught his strapping fecklessness. Hannah Gordon, as the daughter, Aroon, Joanna McCallum was outstanding – literally so, in fact, since, as the story requires, she towered heftily above the other characters.

Large and vulnerable, looking robust and performing delicately, she brought out both the farce and the fearfulness of Aroon's predicament as a blunderingly gawky girl surrounded by barbed impeccability. With skilled gauch-

ness, she even contrived to lumber affectingly. It was her performance too – projecting Aroon's romantic myopia through looks of ecstatic misunderstanding trained on dubious scenes – that ensured the story's two levels were sustained. And, convincingly, she encompassed Aroon's gradual hardening, her learning to survive and thrive in a society where, as Molly Keane has said, "emotions were awfully bad style", by clamping a carapace of etiquette around her demanding impulses.

On Radio 4, over the same three weeks, another novel where laughter can snag on something more lacerating – Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana* – was also being skilfully serialized. Since Greene initially envisaged this particular story as a film-script, it's perhaps unsurprising that it could be dramatized with virtually no structural alteration. There are, however, other awkwardnesses with the work. As Greene has recognized, it can seem too cheery for its background: the last days of Batista's Cuba. Aiming to proffer a cynical, fantastic satire on the British Secret Service, he first set this in Estonia, then shifted it to Havana as more likely to afford a suitably amoral atmosphere. Unfortunately, even in the novel, the amorality refuses to stay confined to carnival carnality and roguish opportunism. Characters die messily, so that reality leaks disconcertingly into the farce. A creepy police-chief becomes too heavily menacing for the novel's light story-line.

Faithfully, the radio version by Gregory Evans picked up the book's discordances as well as its satiric smoothness. While the main performances were suavely comic ones, the pain and panic that break out in some parts of the narrative were also scrupulously registered. Inevitably, some of Greene's most idiosyncratic effects had to be sacrificed in a broadcast version of the book. Radio can't reproduce his glib, terse descriptions – as of a dachshund "that's been poisoned" – The black tube made a slight movement and a pink tongue came out like tooth-paste and lay on the kitchen floor" – or his glancingly cutting imagery – such as that applied to a party of Germans who "carried the superiority of the deutschmark on their features like duelling scars". But, though such visual strengths were lost, with richly subtle voices like those of Eleanor Bron and Edward de Souza in the cast, there were considerable compensations.

Underwear and tear

Ronald Hayman

MICHEL TOURNIER
The Fetishist
The Falcon, Royal College Street, London NW1

Alone on his warm island, Robinson Crusoe doesn't need to wear clothes. But the habit, as Michel Tournier makes him realize in *Friday*, or *The Other Island*, has a certain value. His tattered garments serve as reminders of humanity and civilization; when he is naked, the environment seems more hostile. In Tournier's one-man play *The Fetishist*, Paul Martin describes the wedding night on which he recognizes the smile he loves but blushes at "that big white body displayed there in front of my eyes like... something in a butcher's window". Making for the chair where Antoinette has left her clothes, he brushes his face in them.

The monologue is skilfully structured, with puzzles, surprises and revelations to support the narrative line, which never need dangle too loosely, if the actor knows his job. After hinting that Martin is interned in an institution, the script flashes back to his first meeting with the girl, who has dropped a glove which he would have preferred not to return. The tone becomes still more comic as he explains how he came to be wearing a pair of her panties around his neck during a cavalry charge against a division of German tanks. He attributes his survival to the fetish. Never once to leave an idea undeveloped, Tournier makes Martin rub a scheme by which his fingers are trying to trace

from a Stalg on a lorry that transports dirty linen. He faints with disgust: he was being forced to approach men as he approached women – through their underwear.

Mostly the narrative progresses chronologically. He proceeds from buying extravagant underwear to picking pockets: "The prey must still be warm. I was hunting warm wallets." He graduates to stealing a bra and eventually to terrorizing a woman into surrendering her suspender-belt in a Métro station.

Tournier's witty, resourceful, eccentric script deserves a better production and a more experienced, more expert actor than Christopher Gais. Speaking at the ICA last week, Tournier (who hates stereotypes) insisted that the character is not a perversé and not antisocial, but in this production he is a stereotypical lunatic. Instead of trying to make him seem as normal as possible, Mr Gais imposes cliché clumsinesses, and in the climax of producing a large collection of underwear from his pockets to hang on a clothes-line, he shows nothing like the appropriate enthusiasm for the garments he handles.

The director, Francis Aïqui, has amputated the ending, in which two male nurses lead the fetishist away. This necessitates some rewriting at the beginning, which establishes that the men are drinking at a nearby bar. In addition there are several unnecessary and unhelpful interferences with Barbara Wright's translation. The word "bill" is confusingly substituted for "some money" or for "note", and, more understandably, "columbarium" is replaced by "mausoleum". Unfortunately this is one of the words Michel Tournier uses.

Old men forget

Harold Hobson

RHYS ADRIAN
Passing Time
Radio 3

From the first moment that Roger (Raymond Huntley) opens his mouth in Rhys Adrian's radio play, *Passing Time*, one has an irresistible conviction that the action is taking place in the Garrick Club, that celebrated haunt in the West End where actors, writers, lawyers and publishers are wont to meet. Not only in the Garrick in general, but in one particular place in it: the unpretentious little room, with leather armchairs and a fireplace, that confronts the visitor as soon as he enters the club. If he is early, and a regular visitor, he will find the room empty, except for a solitary but eminent actor sitting by the fireplace. That actor is Mr Huntley, who has occupied the same seat in the same room at the same time for many, many years.

That is the seat occupied in the play by Roger, who, however, is much older than Huntley, having attained the age of ninety-one; and in *Passing Time* he has a companion on the other side of the fireplace, Edward (John Gielgud). Gielgud begins on the top note, in an enormous tirade against the news; the news in newspapers; the news given him by his friends, the news with which he is bombarded by television and radio. Edward is even older than Roger, and with tremendous power excoriates the overwhelming boredom (the word explodes like a cannon shot) with which old age is afflicted. Roger joins in with an equal thunder against the unendurable emptiness of the lives of the old. Nothing to do now except squabble and complain, or ring the bell for the waiter (John Rye); nothing to look forward to, except perhaps to find out who was the young soldier in the First World War who had died shot in the back. Edward cannot remember; indeed he

can hardly remember that there had been a First World War. And his forgetfulness sends Roger into new paroxysms of rage. Surely Edward can remember: but old men forget, which is again a fecund source of frustration, for though they forget, they cannot forget that they are forgetting.

The first chill falls on this passionate anger when they ring the bell, and ask why a certain other member isn't in today. "Oh", says the waiter, trying to make his voice as inaudible as possible, "he's been collected." They do not know, but we know, what that means; and we realize that even if we started in the Garrick, we have somehow already left it. One day Edward comes in, and there is no Roger. He, too, has been "collected". A most unfortunate moment, muses Edward, for he had just remembered that the young man shot for cowardice during the First World War was named Billy. Edward had sought out his wife, "a very young girl", and told her that Billy had died fighting bravely. He had even contrived to find her a medal, with "For Valour" inscribed on the back – very reminiscent of a moving incident in a film of fifty years ago, *A Third Paradise*, when Ronald Colman did the same thing for a colleague who had run away.

Passing Time is a witty, exhilarating and hopeful play. It takes the old clichés about old age, and turns them inside out. It appears to accept the melancholy verdict that in old age the feelings dim, and the powers of response diminish, but shows that this is a lie, like the blasphemy that after half a century of marriage the husband and wife are still in love. Under John Tyden's beautifully paced direction, the magnificent voices of Gielgud and Huntley reveal that in being bored there is a passionate excitement. Not being able to have any emotion at all they show an ungovernable fury: an absorbing interest in not being interested in anything any longer, the overwhelming vitality of the exhausted and moribund.

Winds from sternward

Robert Vas Dias

Ezra Pound in Italy
Istituto Veneto, Venice

The one thing which is uncontroversial about Pound is that Venice was important to him and played a sustaining role in his poetry, particularly the *Cantos*. Venice was one stop on the Grand Tour he made in the company of an aunt in 1898, when he was thirteen. He arrived for the first of many stays in 1908 and published his first book, *A Lume Spento*, in Venice in the same year. There he also published the last book of the *Cantos*, *Drafts and Fragments*. There, he lived with his companion Olga Rudge, and there he died and is buried.

It was enterprising of the University of Maryland's European Division, in their Distinguished Visiting Lecturers series, to offer a Pound seminar run by three generations of his "other" family: Olga Rudge, now eighty-eight, their daughter Mary de Rachewiltz, who is curator of her father's papers at Yale, and Pound's grandson Walter de Rachewiltz.

Mary de Rachewiltz and her son talked mainly about the *Cantos* from the point of view of its Confucian underpinning and with reference to Pound's life in Italy. Miss Rudge illustrated her talk on Pound's last years with colour slides, mainly informal snapshots and therefore all the more moving, of Pound as family man, as the lionized and pestered celebrity, as friend and colleague, towards the end, the face becomes set in monumental hardness, and the figure – particularly one side view of a standing Pound – is like a Giacometti.

Any extended consideration of Pound, no matter how reasoned, raises tensions, temperaments and old resentments. This colloquium was no exception. Wisely but nevertheless uncompromisingly, Mary de Rachewiltz and her son chose to present Pound in Poundian terms. The artist cannot be subject to the limitations of his audience, she declared at the start, before launching into a cogent summary of her father's efforts in the *Cantos* to track down

every symptom of *Usura*. That he ran risks in this quest was only too sadly apparent, she said, in a reference to his trial and commitment to St Elizabeth's. Walter de Rachewiltz based his examination of the *Cantos* on the leitmotif of the wind as a kind of life force or *elan vital* that runs through the work, from the first *Cantos*, "winds from sternward" belling *Olympus* sails, to the "blown husk that is finished" of the last *Cantos*. The wind also represents flow and change, conveying Pound's belief that ideas, like wind and currency, are meant to circulate in print as well as over the airwaves, one gathers.

Both Miss Rudge and her daughter feel that Pound should have been tried on the charges of treason, but only, Miss Rudge told me, in a period of recuperation in, of all places, St Elizabeth's; there he could recover his health and brief himself on the complexities of his defence. "Instead", Miss Rudge said with some vehemence, "they broke him down physically and mentally before they put him in St Elizabeth's." With much of the same force, Mary de Rachewiltz told the seminar that the *Cantos* were "misconceptions, totally anti-Semitic were a hot-tempered man, she added, true, but "he wasn't mad, he was mad at" the fact this to be somehow different from most holding convictions.

If the passionate intensity of the words of the family at least was somewhat justified, it had the effect of driving home the main theme about the seminar's subject: one cannot separate the ideas from the poetry, the man from the poet. The *Cantos*, as Pound said, is a poem containing history, but it's just as much the history of a man and the ideas that shaped him, and the ideas are susceptible to change in the light of events: "to confess wrong things, losing rightness", he writes in *Canto 16*. The difficulty of the work was not denied, though the way of approaching it was suggested by Pound himself who, when his daughter was struggling with the *Cantos*, told her, "I want you to understand them, just leave the damn things!"

Formality and abandon

John Hope Mason

MARIVAUX
False Admissions and Successful Strategies
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

Like many good playwrights, Marivaux began his career by insulting his predecessors. He had a low opinion of Molière, he wrote parodies of the heroic style, and he attacked that epitome of neo-classical values – *clarté*. He saw that there were thoughts and feelings which were too fleeting or imprecise to be clearly expressed. What we say may not be what we feel, and what we feel may not be what we think we feel. What is said and felt and thought to be felt (and/or felt to be thought) is a much more complex matter than merely "le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point". Pascal's dictum implies that knowledge is possible and definable. For Marivaux, however, everything, including language itself, may be uncertain. Experience can only be caught on the wing. And this, of course, the theatre is eminently suited to do.

It was not something, however, which the Comédie-Française was suited for when Marivaux was writing his first plays. At this time, twenty or so years after the death of Racine, the rhetorical and declamatory style of acting dominated the French theatre. Although Marivaux did write for the Comédie-Française his biggest and most lasting successes were for the Italian theatre in Paris. Their tradition of *commedia dell'arte* might seem even more remote from his highly cultivated and artificial world, but the playwright and the Italian actors shared certain predilections: they were less interested in character than in behaviour, whether comic knockabout or psychological intricacy; they were both opposed to heroic pretensions; and they were both fascinated by disguise. Furthermore, the Italian actors had the flexibility and ingenuity which was needed in Marivaux's new kind of drama.

Some of the *commedia* characters remained, notably Arlecchino. Marivaux's first success was called, significantly, *Arlequin poli par l'amour*, and the part of Arlequin in his masterpiece, *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*, is one of the classic comedy roles. In the two plays being examined at Hammersmith, *L'Heureux Stratagème* and *Les Fausses Confidences*, Arlequin is on the way out; in the second play, in fact, he made his last appearance. (This was a matter of expediency as much as choice, because the actor who played Arlequin had hit the bottle and become more of a liability than a delight.) But the Italian element is still strong.

Marivaux transformed this element in a mainly witty way. The obstacles to true love were no longer the angry parent or jealous spouse, but the very feelings of the lovers themselves. "In my plays," said the playwright, "love is at once a mystery and a comedy, and ends by being happy in spite of itself." *L'Heureux Stratagème* is a brilliant exposition of this theme. The Comtesse loves Dorante and is loved by him. She wants something more, some dramatic display of his feelings; so she flirts with the

Chevalier. The latter is captivated and abandons his former love, the Marquise. Dorante feels rejected but at the suggestion of the Marquise he pretends to love her (the Marquise). The Comtesse is appalled and ends her flirtation with the Chevalier. Only at the last moment does Dorante relent and return to her. Whether the Marquise will take back the Chevalier is left open.

This highly artificial plot is, in its essentials, common enough in European comedy, but rarely has it been put to such revealing use. Each shift of the narrative shows a new aspect of behaviour. Everyone, while aiming at his or her own ends, is the victim of others' machinations and his or her illusions. The ambiguities are endless; there is a wonderful moment where the Chevalier, rejected by the Comtesse with the firmest and most direct "No", can only ask: "What does that mean?" The combination of formality and abandon, comic device and deep feeling, brings to mind – when performed as superbly as it is here – that other eighteenth-century masterpiece using this plot, *Costi Fan Tutte*.

Les Fausses Confidences is equally straightforward but more sombre. Dorante loves Araminte, a wealthy widow, but his lack of means puts him out of the running as a possible suitor. His servant, Dubois, contrives ways of making Araminte fall in love with him. All the other characters, Dorante's uncle, Araminte's mother, a Count, have their own plans, but Dubois outwits them all by an ingenious mixture of truth, half-truth and deception. In the end Araminte defies everyone in order to return Dorante's love and Dubois throws up his hands in triumph: "I am covered with glory."

Like all Marivaux's plays it is set in a world that is isolated both temporally and spatially. We learn little of what lies outside the room where the action takes place, what went before, or what might follow: which leaves us, in this play, with something of a mystery: why does Dubois do all this? We are given no reason. However, it is hard not to feel that his interest is like that of Marivaux himself, in his desire to put people in love under the closest scrutiny, to try to pin-point the fugitive moment and bewildering emotion, where truth can be deception and vice versa, and where tenderness and cruelty can seem alarmingly close to being partners.

The Hammersmith productions, by Mike Alfreds, for Shared Experience, are achievements of a high order: expertly translated by Timberlake Wertenbaker, brilliantly designed by Paul Dart, and acted with confidence, fluency and precision. *False Admissions* does not have quite the assurance of *Successful Strategies*, but then it is a much more demanding piece. Alfreds handles both plays with an unerring sense of pace and just the right attention to their formal qualities. All the cast are good and Philip Voss is outstanding. Up to now Marivaux's plays have been, if not a disaster area, certainly a dismal zone in the repertoire of the English theatre. With these productions they take their rightful place as the works of a master dramatist.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 150
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach our office not later than December 16. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers (based on that date, or falling due the most nearly correct – in which case any incorrect answers will also be taken into consideration). Entries, marked "Author, Author 160" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The TLS*, 4, Bedford Square, London WC1N 3AU. The winners will be notified by post.

1. "They begin, I believe, by Brussels."
"I can hardly imagine anyone," Lady Georgina observed, "setting out deliberately for Brussels."
Competition No 146
Winner: M.E. Mitchell
Answer:
1. Gertrude's French was so bad that anyone could understand every word of it. But there was no light, either of comprehension, or of increased anger in the painter's glittering eyes; they went on looking hostile."
Randall Jarrell, *Pictures from an Institution*.
2. "My guess, nobody'll ever know where she came from. She's such a goddamn liar, maybe she don't know herself any more. But it took us a year to smooth out that accent. How we did it finally, we gave her French lessons; after the cold imitation French, it wasn't long as she could imitate British."
Thomas Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.
3. "Weep not for little Lancelot!"
Addressed by a French marquis.
"Though loss of honour was a wretched thing, that how it's improved her French."
Henry Graham, *More Adventures in France*.

COMMENTARY



Dobson's self-portrait with Sir Charles Cotterell and Nicholas Lanier, from the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in its catalogue (92pp, with eight colour and seventy-one black-and-white illustrations. £5.95, £3.95 paperback. 0 904017 52 4).

Noble in defeat

Roger Lockyer

William Dobson 1611-46: The Royalists at War
National Portrait Gallery

Earlier this year the National Portrait Gallery mounted a superb exhibition, *Van Dyck in England*. Now it provides a coda in the shape of *William Dobson 1611-46*. Dobson is often regarded as a pale imitator of Van Dyck, but this welcome and rewarding display of his work shows that he owed more to Caravaggio and to the Venetians, and that he was, in any case, very much his own man. This is brought home by his youthful self-portrait, sober in its use of colour, somewhat coarse in its rendering, but painted with a directness, almost a brutality, that deliberately eschews the elegance of Van Dyck. Dobson could, if he wished, paint in the grand manner, as he shows in his three-quarter-length of Endymion Porter, which was the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1970 and is one of the most richly satisfying of all early Stuart portraits. Indeed, if England had remained at peace Dobson might well have become a court painter in the Rubens-Van Dyck tradition. As it was, events compelled him into a different path.

The brief facts of Dobson's life are given in the invaluable catalogue by Malcolm Reynolds. Born in London, he worked as a print seller and picture dealer and developed his artistic talent under the direction of Francis Cleyn, a German painter who was resident in the city. But Dobson also had access to the fine collections of old and contemporary masters built up by Arundel, Buckingham and Charles I, and his paintings show just how much he learnt from these. Dobson was lucky in this respect, for his emergence as an artist took place at a time when Caroline London was becoming one of the major centres of artistic appreciation in Europe. In 1640, however, came the collapse of Charles's personal rule and two years later the Civil War broke out. Charles established his headquarters at Oxford, and among those who followed him there was Dobson. He stayed in the royalist capital until its surrender in the spring of 1646 and then returned to London where, in October, he "died very poor, at his house in St Martin's Lane". Dobson's reputation therefore rests almost entirely on the pleasure he imparted while he was in Oxford. Van Dyck had immortalized the members of the Caroline court in their splendour and elegance during the high summer of the monarchy. It was left to Dobson to portray the cavaliers at war and in the hour of defeat.

This does not mean that all Dobson's portraits are rough-hewn or sober in tone. The

cavaliers were men of style who took their best clothes to Oxford and wore them with a swagger, along with the red sash that proclaimed their loyalty. Montague Bertie, second Earl of Lindsey, is typical of them. Standing proudly with one hand on his hip and the other holding the white wand of his office as Lord Great Chamberlain, he looks at peace with himself and the world. But the cuirass glowing in the darkness behind him tells another story, as do the troops in the background. This is no foppish courtier, but a hardened warrior who fought bravely at Edgehill and "stood undauntedly with his pike in his hand" defending his mortally wounded father. Another zealous royalist was Colonel John Russell, whose high neckcloth tied with a blue ribbon gives him something of the air of a Regency buck, but who displayed superb courage when he led Rupert's infantry in the assault upon Leicester.

Rupert himself is depicted in a half-length painted towards the end of Dobson's stay in Oxford. The portrait is unfinished but this does not detract from its power; on the contrary, it enhances it. Rupert also appears, along with Colonels Russell and Murray, in a conversation piece which is one of the most arresting pictures in the exhibition. Russell is seated at the end of a table watching Murray dip the cockade of his hat into a wine glass while Rupert looks on. It is not known what incident this picture records, but its lack of pose, its deliberate casualness, make it astonishingly vivid. Only the voices are missing. There is another conversation piece, from a slightly later period, in which Dobson has included himself. This painting is far more contrived than the earlier one, more of a study in symbolism and allegory, but it is done with an assurance and bravura that suggest how excitingly Dobson might have developed if only he had not died so young.

As it is, we are left with an oeuvre that was crammed into little more than three years, during which time Dobson was often working under difficulties; the ghostliness of his later portraits, for instance, arises from the thin texture of the paint which was probably caused by the fact that the materials which Dobson needed were not available in the besieged city. Dobson was unfortunate in some respects, for he came to maturity at a time when English society was in crisis, yet his capacity for getting to the heart of a subject and portraying character directly, forcefully, at times bluntly, made him the ideal man for recording the royalists at war, and the challenge brought out the best in him. All the forty or so paintings in this exhibition repay close study, and the more one examines them the more one is inclined to accept John Aubrey's judgment that Dobson was "the most excellent painter England hath yet bred".

Entrepreneurial powers

I. de Madariaga

MARC RAEFF
The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800
284pp. Yale University Press. £19.
0300 028695

In these three thought-provoking essays Marc Raef has attempted to interpret the particular form of state organization which characterized much of Eastern Europe and Germany in the period 1600-1800, and which frequently goes by the name of the *Polizeistaat*. His subject is "the rate and thoroughness of a society's success in internalizing the values of the modern, production-oriented dynamic political culture", the factor which, he argues, enabled the changeover from a traditional type of society to a modern one to be made gradually and non-violently.

The three essays are of unequal length and substance. In the first and shortest Raef gives a lucid and cogent analysis of the changes which took place in the European mental climate and which paved the way for subsequent political action. Starting from the assumption that it is Europe which has, since the sixteenth century, marked out the path which other peoples and nations have followed to achieve the target of modernization, Raef argues that historians must turn their attention to the moment when the take-off for the transition from a traditional to a modern society can be pinpointed in the history of a given European country. This is the moment when, according to him, some of the European political élites inaugurated the process of breaking with tradition and applying the entrepreneurial spirit to the organization of collective life. They succeeded in persuading the political authorities (including the territorial rulers where they themselves did not lead the process) and their subjects to accept the new values and to sometimes the remnants of the corporate institutions, to embark on a conscious disciplining of society and a remodelling of its social and economic institutions.

The concept of the *Polizeistaat*, the *état bien policé*, of the political theorists of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has aroused renewed interest in recent years. Its basic tenets - the application by the state of rational methods to maximize its wealth and hence military potential - serve as a useful

counterweight to the Marxist presentation of the state as the instrument of the ruling class. In the second and longest essay in this volume, Raef traces the development of the idea of the *Polizeistaat* in Germany through the various *Polizeiordnungen* and *Landesordnungen* issued in many of the minor principalities and some of the major ones, and in the theoretical literature of "cameralism".

The function of politics, as reflected in these documents, ceased, according to Raef, to be merely negative (the preservation of order and the raising of revenue) and was directed to the positive shaping of the future society. Using Gerschenkron's formula of a "high time horizon", Raef argues that eighteenth-century German rulers or ruling groups acted quite consciously to alter the customs, ideas and behaviour of the common people, by means of a "routinization" of activities designed to induce them to cooperate in creating this new future. It was with this purpose in mind that codes and regulations, laying down new and regular patterns of behaviour from cradle to grave, were drafted and imposed. The new administrations were "rational, purposeful, voluntaristic", and they possessed an inherent dynamism, never more so than when, in the eighteenth century, the practices of the *Polizeistaat* were imbued with the belief in perpetual progress and couched in the rhetoric of the Enlightenment. Herein lay the intrinsic contradiction at the heart of the whole system, and the cause of its ultimate downfall, when the energies it had unleashed broke from the control of the state which had set them in motion.

Raef has examined hundreds of separate German ordinances, noting that the first requirement, particularly in Protestant states, was the proper ordering of church attendance, and the inculcation of habits of steadfastness and obedience after the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War, and the disappearance of the old, Catholic, ordering of society. The new policies also involved the re-organization of the social institutions, by which the implementation of decrees could be entrusted, as well as the formation, by education, of a new class of officials and professional people, imbued with a common ethic. All this was worked out against a background of regulated economic activity, increasing prosperity in some cases, and improvement in the material conditions of life (health, hygiene, fire precautions, lighting and paving of streets, food and water supply, insurance, etc.).

Cogently as Raef's argument is expounded,

the reader remains in some doubt about the process he describes. To what extent were productive forces really mobilized in Germany? Were these forces really production-oriented? If one examines the ordinances alone, then Germany, from say 1600 to 1750, should have been a thriving, intellectually stimulating, economically bustling community of states. Instead it was a congeries of somnolent and lethargic principalities, in which the main interest of the princes was the building of palaces and the maintenance of armed forces, frequently paid for by foreign subsidies. The *Polizeistaat* was also on the whole a phenomenon which originated in Protestant Germany, just as the officials who implemented its norms in both Protestant and later in Catholic states emerged mainly from the Protestant universities of Göttingen and Halle. Raef in fact deals with intentions, rather than results; his is a retrospective analysis, ordering policy decisions into a harmonious and intelligent whole, rather than a reflection of the haphazard, hand-to-mouth experimenting of which most government consists.

When Raef does turn to the application in practice of the concepts of the *Polizeistaat*, he chooses Russia. The third essay in the volume deals with the efforts of Peter I, and later Catherine II, to translate cameralist principles to the Russian empire. There were, as Raef rightly points out, many obstacles in the way. There were no corporate bodies (*Stände*, city corporations, guilds, universities) to which some of the administrative tasks could be delegated. There was an almost total absence of educated manpower, trained, as in Germany, either by the universities or by the church, in law and the management skills necessary for the implementation of the new legislation. It was this lack of support from an efficient bureaucracy, and the probability of opposition to his policies from all classes of society, which gave to Peter's reforms their feverishness and their brutality. But there are two, somewhat different aspects of the translation of the *Polizeistaat* to Russia which Raef does not deal with. The first is the sheer size of the country. Whatever the cultural level, the regulating process was bound to be far more difficult, and to require far more trained manpower in such a huge state, if only to man the requisite channels along which orders were communicated from the centre to the periphery.

The second aspect of the *Polizeistaat* which Raef passes over in silence, both as regards

Germany, and as regards Russia, is its military significance (the entry "armed forces" does not figure in the index). Yet surely the evolution of the policies which placed a standing army under the exclusive control of the ruler enabled him to raise the necessary revenue independently of the *Stände*, policies which go as far back as the Great Elector of Brandenburg, was one of the key factors in the productive and administrative mobilization which goes under the name of the *Polizeistaat*. It was certainly the military aspect which attracted Peter I's attention in the first place. And if any institution served to "socialize" or indoctrinate Russians of all classes with the "ethos" of the regulated state it was the professionalized military corps, with its own code, its own laws, and its own schools. Peter used his guards officers in a manner reminiscent of the Mongol Khans, either to fly to the furthestmost ends of the empire to execute his orders, or to sit in the Senate and see to it that the senators did not waste time bawling or indulging in irrelevant debate. Not that the armed forces were without a part in Germany. On the contrary, administrative reform was largely motivated by increased military needs. But the armed forces played an essential role in moulding the new Russian society, whereas in Germany they shared this role with other, civilian groups.

As an exercise in comparative history this is a most stimulating book which will provoke argument and further research. It is stronger on theoretical exposition than on the analysis of the practical application of the concept of the *Polizeistaat*. Moreover, cameralism as a means of orienting society towards production seems to have evolved only in certain specific parts of Europe. The mental climate and the practices of the *Polizeistaat* are weakest precisely in those countries which had advanced furthest in the internalization of production values, namely England, the United Provinces and France. And the personalized, autocratic state is too intelligent, too purposeful, too omniscient in Raef's analysis to be altogether convincing, however important it may be to restore to it some of the independence which some Marxist theorists deny to it. Seen in a wider and longer perspective, however, and as an exercise in the history of ideas, Raef shows a most acute and imaginative understanding of underlying trends, notably "the contradiction inherent in the endeavour to foster and give full scope to the creative energies of individual members of society by means of the state's direction and control".

Scenes of corruption

Colin Smethurst

BRIAN NELSON
Zola and the Bourgeoisie: A study of themes and techniques in 'Les Rougon-Macquart'
230pp. Macmillan. £20.
0333 319835
PHILIPPE HAMON
Le Personnel du roman: Le système des personnages dans 'Les Rougon-Macquart'
d'Emile Zola
325pp. Geneva: Droz. Sw fr 40.

Reading these two books in quick succession, one is tempted to believe that national stereotypes really exist: the English book is a plum-pudding with lots of good things in it, the French one a wondrous product of the systematic spirit; the one pragmatic and fairly traditional, the other constantly preoccupied with theory.

Brian Nelson's study is articulated round what he sees as the salient features of Zola's bourgeois world: waste and parasitism, bourgeois sexuality, the problem of leadership and Utopian vision. These themes, together with some analysis of the way Zola's style accommodates or expresses them, are then examined in relation to *La Curée*, *Une Page d'amour*, *Pol-Boutille* and *L'Argent*, the discussion of these four novels constituting the bulk of the volume.

Because of the dominance of *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal* in the Zola canon, the novelist is commonly associated with the depiction of the working classes and their environment, whereas in fact about three-quarters of his series of twenty *Rougon-Macquart* novels is concerned with the portrait of the middle classes or else non-working-class subjects. As Nelson says, the Dreyfus affair, *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal* "have tended to promote a simplified view of Zola as champion of the oppressed... rather than an advocate of responsible bourgeois leadership". Nelson demonstrates quite clearly that Zola, in spite of his scathing attacks on the hollow sham, the viciousness, the greed and

decadence of the bourgeoisie, nevertheless works his way steadily towards a vision of society transformed by enlightened, technocratic, bourgeois paternalism. This vision is explicit in the last, highly didactic novels like *Fécondité*, and particularly in *Travail*, where a bourgeois Messiah creates a sentimental Utopia in which all problems have been dissolved, and all classes live in harmony and gravitate round the patriarch who, outdoing Moses, has not only led them to the Promised Land but continues to dwell among them to enjoy the fruits of his mission. Even in the early novels this strand is present, though mercifully not dominant.

La Curée, the first novel discussed in detail by Nelson, while forceful in its condemnation of bourgeois corruption, contains within it a dream of bourgeois virtue and decency, an implicit appeal to the bourgeoisie to return to the true way. This essentially nostalgic vision is progressively displaced or covered over by the vision of scientific advance ushering in the new and happier future for society. For example, in *La Débâcle*, the penultimate novel in Zola's series, even the Prussian military machine in its victory over the French army is portrayed as admirable because it is scientific, the agent of divine retribution sent to punish French society for its excesses and its corruption.

Nelson's study is particularly commendable for its extended essays on his four selected novels, in which the remarks on Zola's treatment of theme and technique often go beyond the confines of the particular novel under discussion. That said, one comes to the awkward question of the relationship between theory and practice in criticism. There is a regular undertow of remarks in Nelson's book which say or imply that Zola is a poor and crude novelist. Themes are said to be treated in a "blatantly insistent way", "stylistic weaknesses" are pointed out, *L'Argent* is "artificially unremarkable and rather ponderous". All this may be true, but the statements are not related to any concept of what might be a "proper" way for Zola to deal with themes and what might be an artistically acceptable style. Instead of relating the Zola text to explicit

criteria or simply treating it as text, it is related to implicit, normative notions of artistically acceptable practice.

Similarly, in the space of two pages Nelson manages to raise and solve (or dismiss) the problem of definition of the terms bourgeois and bourgeoisie with a quick nod in the direction of E. J. Hobsbawm and Max Weber. Admittedly the problem is a boring one, but it does exist. Moreover, when "bourgeois" values or "bourgeois" behaviour are found in "working-class" characters (for example, the study of the unconscious and the oniric in *Une Page d'amour*, classified as "bourgeois" by Nelson, can be paralleled by similar studies and even similar terminology in Zola's "working-class" novels), then the problem becomes acute. If bourgeois values are not class-specific, then what is the function of the term "bourgeois"?

Insufficient theorization is not the problem facing the reader of Hamon's study of the functional and fictional role of character in the *Rougon-Macquart*. The assumptions at each stage in the argument are all examined and made explicit. The French is, alas, extremely congested, the sentences often struggling on for half a page or more, in the attempt to convey at one and the same time an argument, illustrations of that argument, qualifications and illustrations of the qualifications, plus the occasional illuminating aside. It is, however, worth persevering with, because it is addressing a central problem in the study of narrative fiction, that of the concept of "character" or the "character-effect" in a novel and the extent to which it is shaped by external and internal formal constraints. As the subtitle indicates, the study adopts a systematic, paradigmatic approach and is less concerned with the development of character through an evolving plot. On the other hand, Hamon does not propose a purely formalist study, seeking instead to integrate with the "internal" study of text certain "external" conditioning factors like the realist/naturalist project and Zola's working method, which organizes material in plans, series, groups, all of which Hamon calls

the *cadre des charges* of Zola's characters.

In expounding the "internal" system Hamon begins with a study of the associative values of proper names. This produces interesting insights, for example when the commonly pejorative and popular note in the French suffix *-ard* is shown to provide background conditioning when we read the name Macquart. Often, however, such associations seem arbitrary. The element "MAK" in the name Macquart is held to refer us to *macule*, blotch or bloodstain, and *mâcher*, chewing and hence appetite, struggle for existence. The name Macquart is thus seen as emblematic of the destiny of this side of the family in Zola's series. One feels like asking why "MAK" should not refer us to *macabre*, or *macadam* or *macaroni*? When such associations are further reduced to the level of phonetic *actants* (A, occlusives, and R connoting negativity) we are in the area where critical analysis competes with palimistry.

Much more convincing is the exploration of the idea of "territorialization" of characters, whereby environment in the broadest sense not merely surrounds characters but actually constitutes them, and provides a fundamental impulse for plot, characters' actions and the dominant metaphors of the text. This view goes well beyond the traditional one of characters in Zola being determined by environment. The volume is completed by an excellent use of modal analysis (the role of *vouloir*, *pouvoir*, *savoir*) to demonstrate the functioning of character, and showing, in Zola's case, the clear predominance of the *libido sciendi*.

This book is likely to become a fixed point of reference for narratologists' discussion of character, while Nelson's is, in the old-fashioned sense of the term, a readable one which will help the student to take an interest in some less commonly read Zola novels. Like Nelson, even Hamon slips on two occasions that Zola's descriptions are over-repetitive or his justifications of them a little too obvious. One wonders whether, behind the different approaches of the two critics, there is still today a nagging feeling that Zola is not quite in the first rank of creative novelists.

Countering the king

Roger Mettam

DAVID PARKER
The Making of French Absolutism
160pp. Edward Arnold. £10.95 (paperback £5.95).
07131 63828

David Parker's new book is a masterly blend of conclusion, synthesis and scholarship. Incorporating the fruits of much detailed research by recent scholars, his clear and convincing account is full of penetrating insights into numerous aspects of French history. His text will be as accessible to the student and the general reader as it will be stimulating to the academic historian, and it will surely become required reading for anyone with an interest in early modern France.

French theories of monarchical power, like the daily reality of government within the kingdom, were based on an irreconcilable dualism. The king was to be absolute and yet his power was undoubtedly limited by the host of privileges and rights which were passionately cherished by various social groups and institutions. Even when the crown tried to extend its sphere of influence, its newly created officials soon exhibited the same duality, alternately obeying the king and defending provincial liberties against further centralization. This is best demonstrated by the *parlements*, who often used their authority, given to them by the king, to reject edicts which the monarch himself had

issued. Yet despite their differences, the king needed these courts to register and therefore give greater status to royal ordinances as much as the judges needed their sovereign, on whom their own judicial powers ultimately depended.

Wisely but untypically, Dr Parker begins his story in the later Middle Ages, in order to discover how far the seventeenth-century monarchy had travelled along the road to the "modern state". Rejecting the old clichés about the omnipotence of Louis XIV, he shows that Versailles was the fulfilment of a long process, but devised to disguise the weaknesses of his government. Louis still had to take account of powerful social élites and institutions which might support or oppose him, and he therefore tried to avoid provoking them. The recent Frondes had revealed the dangers of alienating all these potential opponents at one and the same time. Accordingly, Louis and Colbert were not great innovators. They confined themselves to making the traditional system work more efficiently, and even here they were not uniformly successful.

A major problem for the Bourbons was the lack of an effective national representative institution, in which the royal ministers could explain their policies and difficulties to the nation. In consequence the provinces were unsympathetic towards central government demands for higher taxes, seeing them only as unjustified attempts to undermine their long-

established privileges. When the crown tried to compel because it could not persuade, the localities resisted even more aggressively, although Parker also shows how varied were the provinces of France - not only in their customs, laws and attitudes but in their reactions to royal initiatives. Faced with such persistent obstructionism, the king had to use other, more subtle means to advance his cause. He therefore relied heavily on his personal network of patronage, enlisting the help of powerful governors, nobles and bishops, whom he rewarded with titles, favours and pensions. These prestigious élites had their own dependants in the localities, as unfortunately did those great nobles who regularly challenged the power of the royal ministers. Thus there existed a whole series of rival clientage systems, informal and personal, whose members worked hard to influence or infiltrate themselves into the formal social and bureaucratic hierarchies.

Acknowledging that most royal ministers shared a permanent desire to move towards absolutism, Parker points out that many of their steps in that direction were taken at moments of international or internal crisis, were therefore ill-thought-out and added further fuel to the jurisdictional disputes which were a perpetual subject of contention among the local élites. Thus "absolutism was always in the making, but never made". Although many royalist pamphleteers loudly claimed that it had become a reality, "Not that all royalists were absolutists, for many of those who sincerely supported the power of the crown were

bitterly opposed to the centralizing policies of the royal ministers.

Many topics receive illuminating treatment in this short book - theories of monarchy and of resistance; the practice and growth of government and administration; the pros and cons of the sale of offices; the chaos of the royal finances and the increasingly heavy reliance on financiers; the state of the economy and the theoretical and practical reasons for greater government interference in its workings; religious differences and the attempts at reconciling them; the anatomy of rebellions, especially the Wars of Religion and the Frondes with their strange alliances of groups which in other circumstances might be fiercely at odds; the growth of the army, the rising costs of war and the consequential expansion of the *intendants*; and the social attitudes and priorities of the various groups in society.

Parker thus describes a France in which much remained the same over the centuries, but in which there were also dramatic changes and important shifts of emphasis. This mixture of "continuity and change" is strikingly illustrated by historical clichés which are treated by his technique of first presenting the evidence which suggests a considerable increase in royal power, and then exposing the countervailing factors which effectively undermined these apparent advances. He has thus provided the long-awaited cure in a long royalist pamphlet, loudly claiming that it had become a reality. Not that all royalists were absolutists, for many of those who sincerely supported the power of the crown were

Experiences of defeat

Michael Tilby

FREDERICK J. HARRIS
Encounters with Darkness: French and German Writers on World War II
304pp. Oxford University Press. £20.
0193032462

When war broke out in September 1939, Simone de Beauvoir began reading Glide's diary for 1914. Recalling this fact, Frederick J. Harris, in what is essentially a French-orientated survey, remarks: "Perhaps she expected it to give her some bearings." Perhaps it did. She certainly felt that 1914 offered "beaucoup d'analogie avec le moment présent". Glide's own initial response to the new hostilities was to try and escape what he called the "obsession of war" by memorizing long passages of Racine, though the following summer he seemed to have made a similar attempt to find his bearings by reading Zola's novel of the Franco-Prussian war, *La Débâcle*. Others too came to feel that the war was a familiar experience. Richard Cobb has recently emphasized that in the department of the Nord, at least, it would have seemed to occupy and occupied alike that history was repeating itself in a number of tellable ways. And when the novelist Robert Merle describes the bodies strewn over the beach at Dunkirk, it is almost as if he were talking over where Barbasse had left off some twenty-five years earlier. Yet, ultimately, the literature of previous wars was of little help to French writers faced with the much more dire experiences of the Second World War.

The rapid fall of France obviously meant that, in particular, organized military conflict could play only a small part in the new writing. *Encounters with Darkness* is a modest introduction to a wide range of texts in which the Second World War is the writer's principal and explicit concern. Harris is mostly content merely to hand down the situations and reactions described by his authors. Many of the descriptions recalled are familiar both from the literary texts themselves and from the cinema and other photographic records: the undignified but no less tragic *exode* (Sarah and child abandoned and cheated by their taxi-driver, in Sartre's *La Mort dans l'âme*), the Nazi flag flying over the Hôtel Crillon, the interzone cards, *la grande rafle du Vel d'Hiv* (Losey's *Mr Klein*), to name but a few. Historians had already realized the value not just of the sharp-eyed observations contained in Guéhenno's diary but also of Jean Dutourd's novel *Au bon beurre* and Jean-Louis Curtis's *Les Forts de la nuit*.

None the less, the works chosen present a valuable selection of authentic experiences and attitudes embodied in characters who are often only superficially fictional. As for Harris's method, it works well enough as long as his straightforward descriptions of content require little by way of commentary. Such is the case with the compositions that seek to chronicle aspects of daily life or those which feature behaviour that is self-contained and universally comprehensible (for example, the reactions of French soldiers to defeat). But when the author comes to more complex questions, the double weakness of basing the picture almost entirely on literary texts and of allowing those texts essentially to speak for themselves is glaringly apparent.

By restricting himself to explicit representations of the experience of Occupation, Harris fails to engage with many of its most vital aspects, which by their very nature rarely became material for novels. In the absence of any discussion of this widening gap between history and literature, his exercise loses much of its point. In order to provide a more adequate picture, it would have been necessary to look beyond the examples provided by literary characters to the lives and opinions of the writers themselves, whose direct involvement in the war and its consequences was often a compli-

cated affair, and to some of the oblique ways in which their reactions were expressed. Given Harris's approach, his treatment of collaboration is necessarily perfunctory, squeezed out by a blow-by-blow account of events recorded in Céline's trilogy. No attempt is made to consider Brasillach, Drieu or Rebatet, or the *épurations*. Perhaps the most regrettable omission is that of any reference to the remarkable explosion of poetry written in response to the war and in particular the art of deceiving the authorities with seemingly innocent *contrebande* poems.

On the "literary means" by which his writers depicted the war (very much the author's secondary concern), Harris has little to say beyond some rather obvious comments about the style of the more innovative writers, some self-conscious identification of metaphor, and some heavy-handed allusions to Bachelard and water imagery.

The subtitle notwithstanding, this is essentially a book about France and the French. Where the German texts (they are by and large familiar ones) are directly concerned with the war in France, as for example is the case with Werfel's play *Jacobowsky und der Oberst*, the book's unity is not seriously threatened. But the decision to devote two chapters to German attitudes to the Nazi Reich and its camps is misguided.

Harris's largely passive reproduction of his sources contributes little to our understanding of a period which in recent years has been explored much more probingly by literary-minded historians.

Winner of the Collins Religious Book Award

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At the behest of the bosses

Colin Crouch

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516pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50 (paperback, £9.95).
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GEOFFREY KAY and JAMES MOTT
Political Order and the Law of Labour
173pp. Macmillan. £17.50 (paperback, £6.95).
0333 271521

Among the complex relations between capital and labour, one sometimes escapes attention: capital has the power to shape and define its working class. At certain periods this has not meant much; employers have taken production methods and types of labour for granted and have either had little choice or shown little skill in changing them. But at other times the power has existed and has been used; we are probably now in the early stages of such a period.

The development of new technologies, the changing international division of labour, the redeployments accompanying the recession all make the present a time of extensive change in the organization of work. This gives management an unprecedented discretion to determine the size and skill levels of their work forces and the style of work relations within their companies. If they choose, they can approach this task armed with the very considerable knowledge accumulated by personnel management of the implications of such changes for workers' behaviour. At the same time, the group of employees being most devastated by the changes - manual workers in traditional production industries - include those with the most clearly developed sense of their identity. Those groups in the ascendancy, in both the mental and the non-manual service sectors, are (with the exception of the professions) those with the least clearly established identities.

It would be an exaggeration to say that employers are now acquiring the ability to design the working class of their choice, but that is the general tenor of what is happening in several sectors. The implications are enormous. "Deunionization" can become a deliberate management strategy - it is already well advanced in the US and beginning here. If a firm can keep some kind of control over the numbers and categories employed at individual plants, and establish sound human relations, there is little reason why a union should gain a foothold in a company unless the general political climate is favourable to unions. But if working life ceases to create the identities, oppositions and organizations that have made possible a distinct political presence for labour, and if the manual working class falls to considerably below 30 per cent of the population, what are the prospects for a political climate favourable to unions?

To study all this requires a considerable departure from traditional approaches of British industrial relations and industrial sociology, which have shown very little interest in management as an active force in industrial relations. Instead, they have paid overwhelming attention to the development of workers' shop-floor organizations (the great theme of the 1960s and 70s) and have been preoccupied with ostensibly stable patterns of employment among manual workers in manufacturing industry. How well are scholars likely to respond to the changed world? On the evidence of some of the books here under review, the answer must be "very well indeed".

One must begin with George Bain's collec-

tive volume, *Industrial Relations in Britain*, which is in itself a worthy monument to both the past achievements and future promise of such research and of the Warwick Industrial Relations Research Unit in particular. Its seventeen chapters contain a wealth of interesting argument and valuable data; of course there remain major gaps in knowledge, but it is doubtful whether in any other European country a similar compendium of research findings on the industrial relations system could have been put together. In particular it is welcome to see more contributions from economists than is usually the case in industrial relations literature. The decline of unions, changes in occupational structure, the segmentation of the labour markets are well covered. At least two chapters - those by Michael Terry and by John Purcell and Keith Sisson - deal with the new scope for managerial discretion, and Richard Hyman describes the hopelessly exposed position, given these impending changes, into which the union left pushed itself during the 1970s.

In *Workers and the New Depression* Robert Taylor pursues more specifically the theme of the grim future facing manual workers. Where Bain and his colleagues, while always thoroughly readable, write in an appropriately scientific and disengaged academic style, Taylor is concerned to communicate to a wide audience some facts and arguments already well known to academics. He does this with all the clarity one expects from the labour editor of the *Observer*, but he also does it with a finely controlled sense of commitment. He cares about manual workers, feels deeply about unemployment and its deliberate political use, is appalled at the official neglect of training which is preventing British workers from becoming a skilled work-force for the new technology, and bewails their unwitting connivance in their own decline through their insistence on inefficient working practices (something for which he holds workers, rather than unions, to blame). One might describe his book as a requiem for the political strength of manual labour: that class which, while able to make only very limited improvements in its relative position during its period of numerical predominance, must now face becoming a marginal minority.

The new emerging Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance looks an unlikely vehicle to concern itself with the interests of manual workers and their families, while equally the Labour party continues to abandon any commitment to an ethical socialism. It is not too much of an exaggeration to suggest that manual workers face the prospect of virtual disenfranchisement from the political system. Manual workers look like becoming an embattled, insecure minority of the labour force by the late eighties.

Although it is not specifically concerned with the question of the future, one might expect the latest product of the Cambridge "stratification research" team, *White-Collar Work*, to provide some clues on the general social perspectives of the groups who are replacing manual labour. In their other works these researchers, both together and individually, have given us major new insights; but I found this volume less interesting, perhaps because publication of its findings is split between this and another volume, *White-Collar Unions*. The authors see non-manual workers as presented by their employers with a range of rewards. White-collar workers' attitudes towards their employers and to the possibility of collective action, depend on these rewards (in particular, promotion), which continue to distinguish them from manual workers, and management's ability to manipulate the latter appears as an important form of employer power. But this general argument needs to be broken down into its components: to what extent are there systematic variations in the experience of different kinds of white-collar workers, or workers in different economic sectors?

One possible future strategy for white-collar workers which is likely in practice to be adopted by very few of them is discussed in Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott's account of the now well-known alternative corporate plan devised in the 1970s by the shop stewards' combine at Lucas Aerospace. Faced with the decline of their company and their dissatisfaction at producing primarily for the then dip-

declining) armaments industry, technical and manual stewards at Lucas's several plants put together an imaginative and enterprising scheme for turning the company's plant and skilled work-force over to "socially useful" production - mainly for health equipment, district heating schemes and public transport. The authors trace the story of the rise of the movement, the tensions and divisions among the workers and the subsequent combinations of indifference and hostility from the company, government, union officials and (as if that were not enough) a section of the Communist Party that eventually ensured the demise of most (though not all) of the plan. Although technologists and manual workers collaborated in the plan, it was the former who made the running; is this, as the authors ask in their subtitle, a new form of trade-unionism in the making?

The authors seem surprised and annoyed at the failures of various groups to support the plan, yet by the time they have made clear what they regard as the prerequisites for its success one begins to wonder why, since these requirements include a transcendence of the capitalist-imposed division of labour, a radically different set of trade-union practices from those embodied in current collective bargaining, a system for widespread worker participation in planning, a shift of the economy away from determination by market forces, and the elect-

ion of a radical socialist government. Surely the Lucas plan will be remembered as an "impossible dream", challenging the unimaginativeness of our existing society, rather than as a prototype for a subsequent larger-scale development.

Geoffrey Kay and James Mott's *Political Order and the Law of Labour* looks backwards rather than forwards, but is again relevant to the theme of what forces shape and define the working class. The authors' thesis is that virtually all the central institutions of the modern state can be explained in terms of the need to create "a population that trades in labour power". A population has to be produced which is required to work, and which is then administered and regulated in various ways; none of this would occur if it were not needed for capitalist exploitation. Like all good single-strand theories of complex historical developments, the thesis contains some valuable insights within its overall inadequacy. For example, we learn that the whole system of modern statistics began with the need to enumerate the workforce. But if the rise of the state is so closely linked to that of the labour market, why was the development of the state weakest in the two earliest capitalist economies - those of Britain and the US? And there must be something wrong with an account of the rise of the state which has nothing to say about war.

Into the dreaded database

L. D. Burnard

DAVID BURNHAM
The Rise of the Computer State: A Chilling Account of the Computer's Threat to Society
273pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0297 783025

Every time an American policeman makes an arrest, the luckless offender's details are immortalized in the FBI's distributed database. Every time an American citizen makes a telephone call, uses a credit-card or even (soon) transfers money from one bank account to another, a new record is added to some other database. Every time he or she becomes embroiled with a government agency, be it the Inland Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Labor or whoever, a database somewhere records the fact. Should this upset us?

Bureaucracies have always collected data obsessively, and no doubt always will. But the coming of the computer has changed both the scope of the data collected and the ease with which they may be processed almost beyond recognition. In Dickens's Circumlocution Office the grand principle was "How not to do it"; now that magnetic tape and disc replace red tape and paper, satirists begin to fear that it may in fact be done all too easily. The computer, sold to us as a liberator from toil, may become the instrument of oppression, giving the prying administrators and officious busybodies of the Welfare State rather more access to our private affairs than we anticipated.

But this threat needs either more careful analysis or more effective presentation than David Burnham gives it here if it is to be perceived as a real threat and not just as the product of a liberal paranoia. Even so, the book is a gold-mine of anecdotal information, guaranteed to break the ice at Civil Rights gatherings. A company called TRW, for example, now offers a service to thousands of American credit companies whereby, in return for contributing records of their own customers' transactions, clients can check those of all TRW's other clients. This seems a neat way of ensuring that a bad debt incurred in Illinois can't disappear when its perpetrator moves to Arkansas; but it is less impressive if the Illinois records are inaccurate or not up to date. According to Burnham, TRW receive annually over 350,000 complaints about the accuracy of the information they supply; only a third of these complaints ever lead to a change in the database, largely because of the expense of validating the huge amounts of data involved. Even the original records administered by the FBI have a similar margin of error, for similar reasons: so inaccurate are they in fact that

apparently the police no longer use them - instead the dubious data are sold to prospective employers checking up on candidates for interview.

Burnham, an investigative journalist who won his spurs uncovering police corruption for the *New York Times*, is quick to stress the possibilities such databases offer for misuse. He is particularly concerned about the surveillance activities of America's National Security Agency, and with good cause now that executive orders from President Reagan have apparently extended the purview of this institution to include the whole American people. Ever since the Enigma machine, computers and military intelligence have existed in an uneasy symbiosis, the development of the one both determined by and dependent upon the needs and capabilities of the other. The NSA apparently uses computers on a grander scale than any other single institution on earth. One indication of the range of its operations is the quantity of waste paper it produces. According to Burnham, anyone hoping to sell the NSA a suitably secure shredder ten years ago had to be able to cope with over thirty-six tons of classified waste every working day.

Aside from anecdote, the book attempts to discuss something called "Values". It may or may not be the case that the widespread use of systems analysis is detrimental to proper health care; it certainly is the case that there is a parallel between a society's culture (its way of looking at itself) and its technology (its way of looking at what is not itself), though this is not quite what Burnham has in mind when he means the narrowing of possibilities, the heartlessness of machines and what he considers the indecency of modelling human activity in mechanistic terms. There is nothing here about the benefits that accrue from the availability of information to a benevolent and skilled administration; perhaps, after Watergate, Americans no longer believe in benevolent Administrations. There is nothing here about the token gesture to the importance of epidemiology in identifying the causes of cancer; there are uses of computer databases in research. There is nothing on computer fraud, which probably poses a far greater threat to society than any amount of NSA cloak-and-dagger stuff. Equally, the book underplays the extent to which the computer is becoming demythologized.

Burnham is at his best when sticking to the facts, and when, for example, he is charting the tangled path by which this or that piece of legislation has succeeded or failed on Capitol Hill, his prose has a grim fascination all its own. We may not like it; but it rings true. And yet that his imaginative passages (merely confined to one acutely embarrassing chapter called "A Future?") do not.

Ruminations, fabulations

John Clute

R. H. W. DILLARD
The First Man on the Sun
287pp. Louisiana State University Press. £15 (paperback, £6.75).
08071 10981

The First Man on the Sun an extremely serious novel about our local star, the world, the flesh, the seasons, Galileo, the birds and the bees. It is dense with quotations and literary cross-references, and boasts more ruminating than a herd of cows. At the heart of it we find an old joke.

An American, a Russian, and an Irishman are quarrelling over the space exploits of their various countries. One brags about the Moon, another about Mars, until the Irishman says sure, that's small potatoes, we're after sending a man to the Sun itself. But you can't put a man on the Sun. And why ever not? Because the Sun's too hot. Ah, do you think we're stupid? says the Irishman, sure, we'll be sending him at night.

In his Thoreau-like peregrinations about suburban Virginia, the book's narrator, who is R. H. W. Dillard himself, fastens upon this joke, building it into a science-fiction spoof fable featuring a passel of local Irish-Americans who bung a spaceship together with large hammers and launch it at the Sun, aided by their secret, gravity-defying Leinster grid. (Some readers will recognize the joke within the joke here; Virginia author Will F. Jenkins, who wrote science fiction as Murray Leinster, used an identical "landing grid" in dozens of stories to defeat gravity.) This fable Dillard recounts in a somewhat wearying future tense, forcing on the most stubborn or wishful reader the awareness that the ontological status of the Irish space venture is markedly fragile. This may seem undue caution on the part of the author.

Shopping mad

Anthony Horowitz

WILLIAM KOTZWINKLE
Christmas at Fontaine's
155pp. André Deutsch. £6.95.
0233 915188

With Christmas in the title, a pre-Christmas release and Father Christmas on the cover, you might expect William Kotzwinkle's *Christmas at Fontaine's* to be a cheerful morality tale in the tradition of Dickens. In fact it is a humourless Christmas Carol, a fable in a minor key on the themes of loneliness, alcoholism, divorce and desolation.

It is Christmas at a major Manhattan department store and somebody - or something - is hiding at night amongst the tinsel. This silvery, glimpsed figure is the mainspring of a plot designed to show that beneath the crass commercialism of the season, something else is very much alive. At Fontaine's, that something else would seem to be insanity. All the characters are mad in one way or another. Fontaine himself talks to birds. The department store Santa Claus is a wino. The coffee lady has "nerves like an electrified fence". The window dresser is a mad scientist, "raging homicidal maniac". And to round off this assortment, there is a woman who drifts through the novel in a state of dazed hopelessness.

The book's best idea comes when the intruder is identified as a homeless boy whom Fontaine then tries to integrate into the store as a living advertisement: Fontaine's Orphan of the Year. But the idea runs no further than a few pages. The boy slips away and is forgotten. A generally dismal conclusion is highlighted by the marvellous moment of perverted morality: Mad Maggie, the bag-woman, is presented with a truly happy ending - a pair of brand-new shoes.

But what is the purpose of the exercise? The novel is singularly lacking in laughs; conversely, the often highly charged language of the book's earlier odds with the slightness of the plot. The publishers have chosen to inscribe the cover with the legend "By the author of *King of the Windmills*". This is doubly misleading. Firstly, William Kotzwinkle wrote only the book of the title. The original screenplay was the work of Michael Mathison. But more importantly, such a claim is one to believe that the book might be enjoyed by children. It would not.

Regarding Dillard himself, and his dogged dithyrambic evocations of Sun and Earth, and of how they interact to make the seasons turn, and life pass, and bugs dance, the reader is left in no doubt whatsoever. Dillard, deeply immersed in the phenomena of the turning world, is clearly meant to be very real indeed. Too soon, however, he becomes all too recognizable, a sentimental middle-aged academic demurely haunted by the world about him and the past within, but so muffled by decorum that

presented in a curiously uninflected style. In part this is due to Page Edwards's narrative technique: he gained his early reputation as a short-story writer and seems happier to present cameos of specific incidents in Peggy's life, with little linking explanation. The book can even be read as a cycle of independent but linked stories.

Breaking camp

Brian Morton

PAGE EDWARDS
Peggy Salté
215pp. Marion Boyars. £7.95.
07145 27955

Real goodness is notoriously difficult to portray in fiction without distortion or sentimentality but with *Peggy Salté*, Page Edwards achieves something close to it.

Peggy Salté's life is dominated by three men: her father Carl Fountinier more or less cynically marries her off to his boss at the St Eustace Club, Charlie Salté, a drunk and a womanizer with a streak of maudlin violence. In time, Charlie disappears, returning only when the alcohol has destroyed his body. By then, Peg has taken up with her childhood friend, the painter Alston Tucker. When Charlie dies, Peg and Tucker marry and set up home with Joe, Charlie's son, and Diana, their own.

The narrative is presented in a quietly detached third-person form but it is Peggy's diary that shapes the book. Like her life, her journal is controlled by the men in it. At thirteen, she becomes her father's sole companion and housekeeper, and alters the title of the journal from "The Adventures of Margaret Fountinier" to the more intimate "Peg's Notes". When she marries, it becomes "My Life, At Last!". Peggy's quieter love for Alston prompts "My Private Life", which lasts until arthritis and death overtake her. The book is full of diaries, private letters, secrets, illicit glimpses into other lives.

Peggy betrays rather less emotion through her life than her circumstances would seem to call for. Every event, however dramatic, is

his only attempt to seize the day amounts to recounting at great length a bad joke he cannot even pretend to believe.

The exorbitances of Dillard's life are carefully restricted to the experiences of his Irish alter-ego, Sean Siobhan, who writes his poems, betrays his women, and jumps into his Sun. But we are not meant to believe in Sean Siobhan.

From the icy tongue-twisting abstractions of Dillard's fellow Southerner Guy Davenport down to the whimsy of Ray Bradbury, from John Barth to Flann O'Brien, *The First Man on the Sun* is dense with literary echoes to which Dillard might have paid better heed. However bizarre or problematic the universes they created, none of these authors ever fails to pretend belief. They tell fictions, not lies. Mr Dillard has not told a fabrication; he has merely quoted one.

Edwards presents the life and surroundings of upstate New York with a striking visual clarity, although there is little explicit sense of the passing of time beyond references to war, automobiles, helicopters; Keene Valley seems fixed and static, its life a series of genre paintings held in the community's memory like Tucker's paintings in their gallery. Only once does Edwards introduce an explanatory or thematic note, a quotation - improbably, from Rilke - which would have served as an epigraph but which sounds hollow and contrived in a letter from Peggy. "Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful growing side by side can occur if we succeed in loving that distance which enables us to view the other person whole against the sky."

But *Peggy Salté* is about aloneness rather than loneliness. Edwards doesn't see the separateness of people as depressing; but as the necessary condition for love. Identification between people marks love's end; love depends on clear and entire seeing. Life is a series of "camps", more or less temporary holds on place. Immobile and passive, Peggy Salté still manages to traverse great areas of dramatic time before finally "breaking camp". The novel is, among other things, an extended speculation on time, space and mutual dependence and is an impressive step forward in Edwards's work.

Other boys of the same name, had chosen for him a last name that fit the way they thought of him - as the child pulled from the lake. Peter, with the Baymen until he is twelve and is then set loose on the city of New York where he is unusually active throughout the twentieth century. He becomes a burglar, haunting the houses of Manhattan; then falls in love with Beverly, a consumptive beauty who sleeps under the stars in a tent on top of her father's mansion. The relationship between Peter and Beverly introduces the "love conquers all" theme; a love transcending time and enabling the couple to unite in a vision of a New York that is transformed into a "live creature, pale and pink". New York, indeed, is one of the principal characters in a large cast of characters.

Although Heiprin is at his best when indulging his dazzling powers of invention; he manages successfully to combine lyricism with a convincing account of the commercial and criminal aspects of New York. Wherever Peter goes he is pursued by the Short Tail Gang, the menacing lords of the waterfront. Led by Pearly Soames, a psychopath with a penchant for torturing paintings and a lust for gold. Equally, Peter is pursued by the white horse, his saviour, who transports him to a literal and

imaginative freedom. Athansor, the horse, seems to soar above everything - skyscrapers and clouds - as the city first ices up and then begins to burn as the year 2000 dawns. All the elements in the novel - biblical symbolism, literary fable, realistic narrative - are brought together in a synthesis that offers imaginative myth as an alternative to naturalistic violence.

Mark Heiprin's writing is fluid and expansive; he has the confidence of the consummate artist and the linguistic presence of the gifted storyteller. His new novel establishes him as one of the most accomplished of living American authors.

Waspish ways

Mary Kathleen Benet

WINTHROP KNOWLTON
False Premises
215pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241 10947

A familiar and useful character in fiction is the acute child penetrating the secrets the adults are anxious to keep hidden. Far more unusual, unique perhaps, is the child so anxious to think well of the adults surrounding him that the realities of failed marriages and financial skulduggery have to be gradually forced upon him. Peter Kempton, the narrator of *False Premises*, is such a child, and it is easy to see why the device is so rarely used: we are so attuned to the uncomfortable probe that this regretful exposure of some of a family's truths, more in sorrow than in anger, scarcely seems like a novel. What is gained in poignancy is lost in tension.

Peter's story is a long elegy for his childhood illusions, and for the trappings that surrounded them. "What is it I long for when I recall those early years before the outbreak of war? Is it simply a hunger for certain sounds and sights and smells - whirring lawn mowers and poodles bounding through the orchard and the whole dazzling wisteria-drenched house standing there before me on a late spring day?" Peter's Long Island childhood in the 1930s, and his subsequent progress - school, Harvard, banking - are interspersed with flashbacks to family history. Peter's millionaire godfather, Stim, is a pervasive intruder in what seems like a family memoir: he interrupts the parents' honeymoon and his hold over them is only broken by his own ruin. Stim could have provided a dramatic framework for the book; regrettably, the author seems to resent his presence in this very private story.

It is lovingly told and most of it is pleasurable - who does not like to follow the ruling class through their mahogany and mown-grass world, watching them drink, ride, sail, play tennis, make money and love? There are good observations - the contrast between the daring builders of fortunes and the dull guardians of them - and delightful scenes, like the bringing of electricity to a small Massachusetts town by the inventor-grandfather, the founding genius. Though the tone is nostalgic, it is not sentimental - Knowlton knows his WASPs too well to idealize them.

All the same, it is not quite enough. Louis Auchincloss would have imposed a plot on this rich material. Scott Fitzgerald would have - but that is unfair. Stim has more than a little in common with Gatsby, but what he does not have is his author's sympathy. Fitzgerald, like his hero, could long for the green light on the end of the dock; Knowlton, already standing on the dock, can only regret, feebly if understandably, that it is about to be swept away.

Mythed connections

Alan Bold

MARK HEIPRIN
Winter's Tale
673pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0297 783297

The Revelation of St John provides the symbolism for Mark Heiprin's new novel. There he has found the "pale horse" that charges majestically through the book, the creatures with "stings in their tails", the woman wearing "a crown of twelve stars", the fall of a "great city", the apocalyptic notion of the millennium. There is also, courtesy of Joyce, a "stately, plump" character, and, echoing Eliot, a bridge swarming with "uncountable thousands of refugees". Although the theme - the fall and resurrection of a city - is a familiar one, Heiprin has elaborated on it with assurance and originality.

Peter Lake, the hero of the novel, arrives in America as an infant castaway in a model ship. Found by three wise Baymen, he is rescued and returned to life. "They had called him Peter," says Heiprin with biblical solemnity, "and then, to tell him apart from the several

A Christmas Feast, edited by James Hale (372pp. Macmillan. £8.95, 0 333 35982 8), is the first of a new series: it incorporates *Winter's Tale*, which has been published for the last twenty-seven years. In addition to ten new stories by both unknown and established writers, *A Christmas Feast* contains extracts from some twenty-six novels published in 1983. Among them are extracts from *Waterland* by Graham Swift, *Scandal* by A. N. Wilson, *Hot Country* by Shiva Naipaul and *Sebastian* by Lawrence Durrell.

